

## ENHANCEMENT OF ENGLISH COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR EMPLOYABILITY OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

English has become the universal language widely used by the most of countries of the world. The corporations, governments, communities, educational institutions and nations have understood the due importance of English. It has become even more significant in the digital and competitive era (Al Riyami, 2021). The world economy is transformed from traditional to modern to knowledge-based all-inclusive economy. English performs several functions to cater the diverse needs of various stakeholders. It is used in literature, media, law, education, governance and other fields. English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Technical Purposes (ETP), English for Medical Purposes (ETP) are some of the notable trends found in the world. Likewise, 'English for Business Purpose' has gained the momentum due to increasing demand from the business world. The business communication is a result-oriented, time-bound and customized set of activities which requires specific knowledge, sense of creativity, command over English language, 'Call for action' with high sense of customization (Gaikwad, 2019). This is because the results matter. The present study analyzes how English communication skills can contribute in developing the employability skills of college as well as university students. The study is significant as it emphasizes on skill-gap analysis, industry-academia interface, outcome-based education, skill development and employability of graduates leading to quality education, youth empowerment and finally sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Workplace Communication, English Proficiency, Employability, Higher Education, Business Communication

### 1. Introduction

English is the language of the world. It has influenced the personal, professional as well as public life of individuals. There are various conditions and factors responsible for the increasing demand and significance of English language (McCloskey, 2019). Technology is one of the major factors favourable. The most of the technology, research and development activities take place and published in English language (Routon, Marinan & Bontrager, 2021). Secondly, the leading developed economies like United States, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and other countries use English in their business to the great extent either as first, second or official language. It brings the countries, cultures, communities and individuals to achieve common goals to create win-win situations in the long term (Coffelt, Grauman & Smith, 2019). The corporate governance is based on the maintaining the pool of exceptionally talented people. The employers expect their teams who are globally competitive, interactive, and informative. At the same time, the diverse workforce has become the need of

an hour to cope up with the fast changing market demands (Small, Shacklock & Marchant, 2018). It is observed that the graduate youths who are good in English communication adopt and learn new skills, acquire knowledge and apply them in new environment better than others since they have interpersonal skills for same (Kamil & Muhammad, 2019). The present study analyzes the requirements of industry and how students can meet their demands through English communication skills being better employable candidates.

### 2. Background of Study

There are various reforms witnessed in various sectors and industries in the globe. As the competition is increasing, the firms have no other option than to groom their talent accordingly. The English language skills are considered as the business communication skills at the most workplaces (Torres, Routon & Hartley, 2019). There are various decisions wherein the employees have to come together, understand the new concepts, identify the problems, brainstorm and provide feasible solutions in a timely and effective manner. The

college or university graduates are the future managers. If they are prepared for such situations, they are in a better position to deal with those circumstances. The communication skills such as attentive listening, comprehension abilities, influencing through powerful speaking, intensive and extensive reading, and business writing skills define the success ratio of any correspondence irrespective of internal or external domains (Thomas, Piquette & McMaster, 2016). Therefore, the firms expect to recruit those candidates who are excellence or at least good in communication skills. Naturally, they can understand, analyze, apply the product or process knowledge and do the needful for the organization accordingly (Garner & Shank, 2018).

### 3. Rationale of Study

Unemployment has remained a great concern for developing economies as well as government. This is because there are several challenges such as growing population, lack of expertise, poor quality of education, and absence of infrastructure, faulty government policies and others (ILO, 2021). However, English communication skills contribute in improving the opportunities for the graduates in terms of employment. Along with the knowledge and degree, the corporate firms are looking for the skills and expertise. English communication skills are amongst the top five badly required skills in the business world (Gazier, 2017). The present study analyzes how communication skills can influence the job opportunities of young graduates in developing economies like India.

### 4. Scope and Significance

There are three types of economies in the world. The developed, developing and underdeveloped economies. The developed economies like United States, United Kingdom and others have better qualities of education. In addition, English is used as their native language. There is dominance of these economies on the developing nations due to international trade, commerce activities and import-export policies (Gaikwad, 2016a). On the other hand, underdeveloped economies have been struggling for existence in their own

ways. English bridges these gaps and create conducive environment opening the gateways to explore the opportunities available in the international market (Confederation of British Industry, 2015). For example, countries like Mexico, India, Philippines, Costa Rica tapped the opportunities through IT and ITES / BPO / RPO and other service industries. At present, India IT/BPO sector has provided employment to more than 2 lakh individuals. It became possible due to English communication skills with majority. There are many direct or indirect job opportunities created in the forms of back office, online marketing, sales promotion, tele-services, e-commerce etc. (Kick, Contacos-Sawyer & Thomas, 2015). All of these require good communication skills. Moreover, the graduates from any disciplines can join these types of firms. Mumbai, Pune, Noida, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Chennai have emerged as the IT Cities in India (Gaikwad, 2016c).

### 5. Objectives of Study

The present study has following objectives:

- a) To understand the scope of communication skills in business environment
- b) To demonstrate the various sub-skills of English communication required by the firms
- c) To analyze the influence on English communication skills on employability of college/university graduates
- d) To explore the opportunities available through English proficiency for the college/university graduates
- e) To suggest feasible solutions to bridge the demand-supply gap of talent

### 6. Problem Statement

The quality of education in developing and underdeveloped countries has remained a serious concern for the government, educational institutions, industry, communities and individuals in particular. The young graduates invest their time, money and other resources to get quality education in respective colleges or universities. After spending 3 to 4 years of their valuable life, they are concerned about their dream jobs. However, due to lack of domain knowledge and poor communication

skills they miss many lucrative job offers. Most of the organisations hire candidates who are good in English conversation irrespective of position, department, sector etc. The present study seeks answers to the question: “How do English Communication Skills contribute in developing employability of graduates?”

## 7. Review of Literature

Kohn, L. (2015) examined that English is now the global business language. To facilitate communication and performance across geographically diverse functions and business endeavours, an increasing number of multinational companies such as Microsoft, Airbus, SAP, Renault, Samsung, Daimler-Chrysler, Technicolor, Fast Retailing and Nokia are mandating English as the common corporate language.

Zainuddin, Pillai, Dumanig & Phillip (2019) in their research stated that English is the fastest-spreading language and spoken by approximately 1.75 billion people worldwide—one in every four of us. There are approximately 385 million native speakers in countries such as the United States and Australia, approximately a billion fluent speakers in formerly colonized countries such as India and Nigeria, and millions of people worldwide who have studied it as a second language. It is used by an estimated 565 million people on the internet.

According to Hooley (2020), there are several responsible factors as to understand why English communication skills empower the graduates to get and retain the jobs. The globalization, competitive pressure, international mergers and acquisitions (M&As), compliance, adoption, ease of doing business, branding, access to the world of technology, research and development are notable factors influencing the enterprises right from micro, small and medium enterprises to international corporations (Victoria University of Wellington, 2015). To the other side, English speaking employees experience better career growth, job security, stability and career growth opportunities since they can work in large firms wherein there is continuous requirement of manpower through business expansions, product innovation widening the horizons. English communication enables the

graduates to think out-of-the-box, innovate, inspire, integrate for better results, performance etc.

Prof. Santosh R. Gaikwad (2016, 2019) in his multiple research studies analyzed the positive and significant relationship between English fluency and employability of individuals. He opined that English communication empowers the staff for attentive listening, effective presentation, handling day-to-day meetings, working with assertiveness, and strong sense of conviction helping the customers to take timely and logical decisions. In addition, it meets the requirements such as writing professional emails, business letters, proposals and addressing diverse kinds of audiences publicly. All of these are skills in demand through which the graduates can get jobs and grow in the career paths (Dwyer, 2013).

In the words of Kowalewski and Halasz (2019), English is used in almost every field around the world, including education, science, engineering, information and communication technology, banking, medicine, trade and commerce, transportation, tourism, entertainment, scientific research, internet, telecommunication, business, advertising as well as pharmacy to name a few. Without a doubt, English occupies a unique position because it is the language that is so widely used and so firmly established as a dominant global language in the aforementioned fields, and English's dominance has become like a snowball that is too large to stop.

In another paper, Prof. Santosh R. Gaikwad (2016b) noted that the communication skilled are well-integrated with the soft skills such as interpersonal, intrapersonal, team-building, leadership, emotional intelligence, stress management, analytical thinking, brainstorming etc. The timely and effective communication leads to create healthy human relations and healthy competition at workplace. All of these result into transforming workplaces into ‘second homes’ where teams consider themselves as family members. Such employees stay and work for long period of time in the organization.

## 8. Research Methodology

The present study is qualitative in nature. It examines the present scenario of business

world within the context of COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, demonstrates the skill-gap analysis and explores the avenues available for college as well as university graduates through English communication skills. The study is interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary in

nature as it deals with multiple disciplines such as higher education, entrepreneurship, skill development, educational policy, business world, labour market trends, competency mapping and capacity building etc.

**9. Discussion and Analysis**

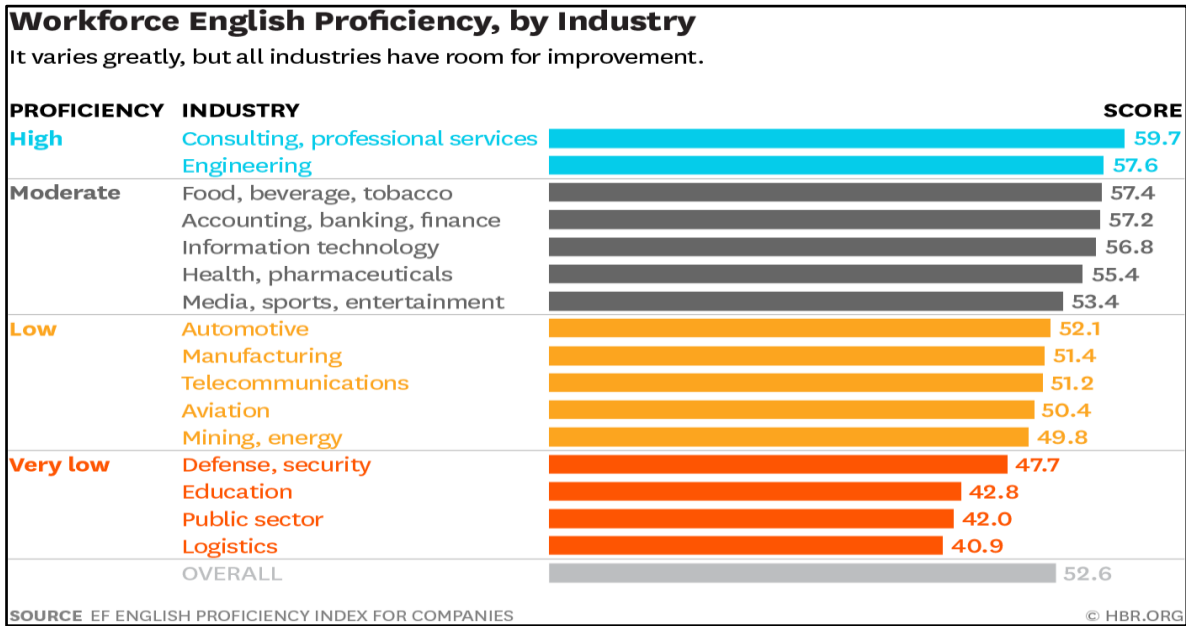
**Table 1: Communication Skills and Graduate Employability (Organizational Perspectives)**

Communication Skills	Domain/Vertical	Channel	Business Tasks Covered
Attentive Listening; Effective Writing	Business Writing and Correspondence	Email, Business Letters, Proposals,	Quotations, Sales and promotion, customer care, follow-ups, recovery, collection, product development and service excellence
Influential Speaking	Making and giving presentations	Online / offline; PowerPoint Presentations	Product Demos, Tendering, Conferences, Trainings
Integration of listening, speaking, reading and writing	External Communication	Proposals, Circulars, Websites	Enquiries, Requests, Follow-ups, Submissions, Compliance
Integration of listening, speaking, reading and writing	Organizational Communication	Intranet, Internet, Community Pages, Face-to-Face Meetings, Social Media	Recruitment, selection, training, reports, events updates,
Technical communication	Corporate Communication & Public Relations	Websites, Press Releases, YouTube Channels	Event Updates, offers, branding, promotion etc.
Professional Communication	Management Information System/s	Multiple channels	Periodical reports, databases, auditing tasks

**Figure 1: Communication Skills and Graduate Employability: Students Perspectives**

Pre-Placement	During-Placement	Post-Placement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Preparing Resume</li> <li>•Reading Comprehension</li> <li>•Verbal aptitude</li> <li>• Job Interview</li> <li>•Group Discussion</li> <li>•Career Counselling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presenting views effectively</li> <li>• Projecting right attitude, behaviour, present of mind through non-verbal communication</li> <li>• Tests (Essay Writing, Summarizing..)</li> <li>•Negotiation of CTC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Provision of additional inputs</li> <li>• Follow-ups</li> <li>• Joining formalities</li> </ul>

**Graph 1: English Proficiency Index: An Overview**

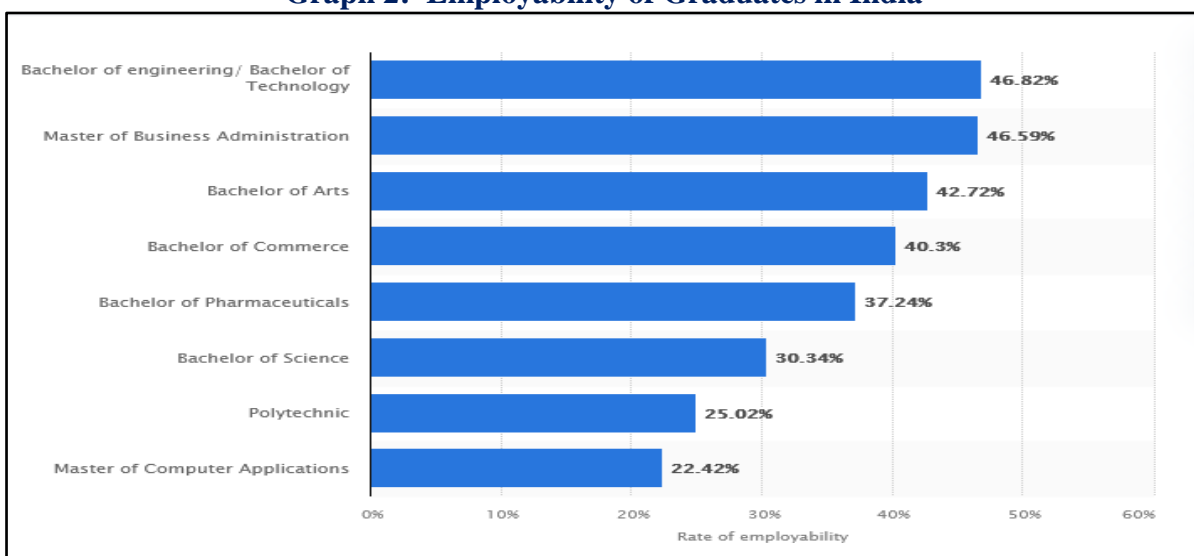


(Source:HBR, 2016)

The Harvard Business Review (HBR) conducted an exclusive survey to examine the Workforce English Proficiency industry-wise in the year 2016. It was found that the requirement varies from one industry to another. Hence, the industries-wise English proficiency was measured with the help of scores from High to Low scales. The Engineering, Consultancy and Professional Services required high-level English proficiency while food and beverages, banking and finance, information technology, healthcare, pharmaceuticals, media and entertainment needed employees with moderate

level of English proficiency. Some industries were comfortable with low level English proficiency since they had to deal with domestic stakeholders more. They included automotive, manufacturing, mining, telecommunication, energy etc. Finally, logistics, education, defense, public sector had requirement of very low English proficiency since Hindi or regional language was given priority in this regard. However, overall 52.60% firms of all industries considered English proficiency as a significant job skill at workplace.

**Graph 2: Employability of Graduates in India**



(Source: Statista, 2021)

India represents the developing economies of the world. It is the leading player in Asia-Pacific marketplace proactively involving in trade, commerce, manufacturing as well as service sectors. There are immense opportunities to export the talent. It can be associated with 'Aatmnirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India)' attracting foreign currency to the motherland. One side, there are opportunities in the international labour market. However, the above graph indicates that Indian graduates lack employability skills. The highest employability skills are possessed by Engineering and Management whereas students of computer applications lag much behind in the race of job competition. In a nutshell, it is clear that the overall employability of Indian graduates is less than 47%. The poor English communication skills are one of the major barriers for the same. Hence, enhancement of English communication skills increases the employability chances to the great extent.

### 10. Findings of Study

- a) The employability of graduates is a matter of concern. There are less than 47% graduates employable in developing economy like India. Poor communication skills are one of the barriers in getting jobs for them.
- b) The English communication skills also enable the individuals post-placement in the various firms. They contribute in terms of career growth and job security to the great extent.
- c) The enhancement of English communication skills lead to develop soft skills such as leadership, team-building,

- motivating self and others, organizational citizenship, innovation and creativity skills.
- d) The multinational / international firms give first preference to English proficient graduates as they have to deal with international clients/ customers more often.
  - e) Digitalization, globalization, increasing competition and demand for English can help in capacity building of graduates.
  - f) Those students who are proficient in English communication have better job opportunities, security and growth prospects than non-proficient students. Hence, it can be said that there is a close and positive relationship between enhancement of English communication skills and employability of graduates.

### 11. Conclusion

All of the above discussion shows that English is the need of modern and digital world. Individuals, communities, governments, organizations and corporate world have been using it in personal, professional and public lives. It offers various competitive advantages in seeking the dream jobs, security, stability, career growth, international exposure, higher salaries, promotions etc. The enhancement of English communication skills enables the college and university students of different disciplines to get the job in different sectors and industries in the globe. It is essential skill required from entry-level executive to top senior management handling day-to-day tasks and managerial functions in an effective manner. All of these create win-win situations for the employers and employees as well.

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