Mastering English Communication Techniques is a Significant Aspect Influencing Job Opportunities: Observations from Employers in Maharashtra

Dr. Swapnil P. Dhomane

Assistant Professor, Shivaji Mahavidyalaya, Gadchiroli
Email: dhoaneswapnil@gmail.com

Abstract:

While the English language continues to be the principal medium for international business communication, the importance and ramifications of English language pedagogy within English-medium institutions of higher education in India are essential to any discourse regarding graduate profiles and the employability of graduates within the global labor market. This report delineates the results of a study that scrutinizes English workplace communication competencies among a cohort of Indian employers and students at Gondwana University, Gadchiroli. By employing a blended research methodology, data were collected through telephonic interviews, student performances in professional scenarios, and focus group discussions, inclusive of employers. The findings indicate that in Maharashtra, employers place considerable value on general employability skills acquired through English as a secondary language. Importantly, scholars must present themselves as confident and knowledgeable individuals throughout the recruitment process and subsequently adeptly manoeuvre through the sociolinguistic landscape of their respective organizations. Consequently, it is concluded that the curriculum for English language instruction in higher education programs must transcend the boundaries of merely linguistic and degree-specific content areas to include a broader range, integrating English for communicative purposes, which encompasses both specialized discourse areas and fundamental generic employability skills and competencies.

Keywords: *English Language, Employability, Higher Education, Skills.*

Introduction:

It has been posited that the phenomenon termed the 'India Spring' was, to a certain degree, influenced by the imperatives of employability. If this assertion holds true, it underscores the intricate interplay between higher education and the socio-political and socio-economic milieu within which it functions in the region, thereby emphasizing the necessity of cultivating graduates who are prepared for the workforce in the forthcoming years. Notwithstanding the pivotal role of higher education in bolstering the economic and political health of nations within the region, the nature of this relationship remains ambiguous and non-universal, particularly concerning the function of higher education in India. This topic emphasizes its effect as a motivator for evolving societal, political, and economic paradigms, hence enduring as a core facet of scholarly discussions and debates. Specifically, inquiries regarding the requisites of the labor market and the extent to which higher education institutions are equipping students with competencies that align with these labor market demands remain prominent in academic dialogue. Regrettably, although empirical studies have demonstrated

that both India and Gondwana University have been "the most strategic and proactive in establishing employability agendas" at both national and institutional levels, the persistent assertion from employers, both within the Indian context and beyond, is that a significant disconnect persists between their anticipations and their satisfaction regarding the calibre of graduates.

Recently, Gondwana University, Gadchiroli, commenced the phased implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP 2020) about undergraduate (UG) curricula, with substantial advancements anticipated during the 2023-24 academic term for the enrollment of students into newly established NEP-aligned UG programs (B.A., B.Sc., B.Com), followed by the introduction of postgraduate programs such as M.Sc. in the 2024-25 academic session, facilitating the transition of students from the traditional Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) to the newly instituted NEP frameworks.

Nonetheless, it is imperative to note that employers, in addition to a general expectation for proficient English language abilities, frequently exhibit ambiguity regarding the specific requirements or criteria for assessing such competencies. This manuscript serves as a scholarly response to this issue; it delineates findings from research conducted by Gondwana University in Gadchiroli, which involved a sample of various employers and prospective employers to elucidate the nature and extent of English communication skills deemed essential for graduates seeking entry into the Indian employment sector

Context:

The Gondwana University has been envisioned and established with a prescient perspective aimed at addressing the aspirations of the economically disadvantaged and socio-culturally marginalized districts of Gadchiroli and Chandrapur. Although the network of governmental entities has been persistently endeavouring to implement state welfare policies geared towards holistic development, the resultant advancement has been relatively slow in comparison to other regions of the state. This impediment has instigated a plethora of socio-political conflicts and adversities, as evidenced by the increase in Naxalite hostilities. While an expedited, inclusive growth paradigm is the appropriate solution to these issues, its realization necessitates a coherent vision and a meticulously designed strategy. Overall, the conversion of hardships into prospects embodies the real substance of contemporary higher learning. To turn this articulated vision into reality, the institution has explored effective pathways that match our significant aspirations. Most academic programs and numerous services are conducted in the English language. Gondwana University, Gadchiroli provides a diverse range of undergraduate, postgraduate, and diploma programs across various faculties, including Arts, Science, Commerce, Engineering, Law, Education, and Management, encompassing sought-after programs such as B.E., B.Tech., B.Sc., M.Sc., BA, MA, B.Com, M.Com, MBA, MCA, B.Ed., M.Ed., B.Pharm., and M.Tech, with specializations in fields such as Computer Science, Civil Engineering, Electronics, Fashion Design, and Home Science, among others.

Literature Review:

Despite the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the parameters, concepts, classifications, and definitions of 'employability' among employers, government bodies, and academics, there is a notable degree of consensus and commonality regarding core components that can facilitate meaningful dialogue (Harvey, 2001; Lowden, Hall, Elliot, & Lewin, 2011; Brown & Hesketh, 2004). In the findings of Yorke and Knight (2003), employability includes a mixture of successes, perspectives, and personal qualities that boost the odds of people acquiring jobs and flourishing in their preferred careers. This definition has found backing from the British Council lately (British Council, 2013). In their analysis, Lowden and associates (2011) clarify this point by indicating that employers expect graduates to bring not only degree-related technical and disciplinary abilities but also an extensive collection of broader competencies and attributes, covering teamwork, communication, leadership, critical thinking, problem-solving, and managerial skills (p. vi).

These transferable skillsalternatively categorized as 'soft,' 'key,' 'core,' or 'generic' (McLean, 2010), which include communication abilitiesare cited by numerous authors and are perceived by some employers, at least, as possessing greater significance than the attainment of a higher education degree in isolation (Archer & Davison, 2008; Lowden et al., 2011). Nevertheless, this perspective is contested by entities such as the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2009, Foreword), which posits that soft skills ought not to be regarded as a replacement for specialized knowledge and technical proficiencies, but rather as elements that "can differentiate between excelling in a subject and excelling in performing a job."

The concept of employability, defined merely as proficiency In a specific job, Is challenged by the works of Yorke (2004), Yorke and Knight (2006), and the Confederation of British Industry (2011), who assert that the accomplishments, insights, personal characteristics, and capacity to transfer skills should not solely serve individual interests but also enhance the workforce, community, and economy at large. In a separate discourse, Rothwell and Arnold (2007), among other scholars, identify ambition, awareness of labor market opportunities, the positioning of the Higher Education Institution (HEI), and the demand for labor within the students' field of study as critical determinants of employability. Additionally, practical experiences such as work placements, internships, and extracurricular engagements are regarded as significant, while for some individuals, fulfilling the criteria set by professional bodies is essential, whether achieved through a degree or alternative means (Lowden et al., 2011).

To conclude, modern perspectives on employability stress—

"The attainment of competencies and characteristics that enable the individual to acquire and sustain employment, to progress within a designated position, and to possess the capacity to transition to alternative, viable employment opportunities when necessary. This entails the possession of specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions along with the capability to effectively utilize and promote them to prospective employers". (Lowden et al., 2011, p. 6).

The discourse of this paper must assert that employability encompasses not merely the attainment of the requisite knowledge, skills, and attributes deemed essential for securing employment, but also the capacity to effectively promote these competencies and exhibit them to prospective employers. Furthermore, it's essential to showcase how these abilities correspond with the expectations of local and national employment sectors.and global economic and societal collectives. This is delineated on the UK Council for Industry and Higher Education's website (CIHE, as referenced in Lowden et al., 2011, p. 5).

Communication:

The mastery of the English language and the utilization of communicative competencies within the employment sector are integral components of any discourse surrounding employability in the Indian region, as employers frequently assign comparable importance to proficient communication skills in conjunction with specialized subject expertise. Almost all, if not the totality, of the institutions providing higher education in the Maharashtra area endorse some framework of transferable, general, essential, or soft skills that align with those specified in the section before. At Gondwana University, located in Gadchiroli, these capabilities are described in a summary of employability skills obtained from research performed in India.

The identified Employability Skills encompass:

1. Communication

2. Teamwork

3. Problem Solving

4. Proactivity and Entrepreneurial Spirit

At an initial examination, the predominant emphasis of research concerning English language competencies, and consequently this manuscript, is anticipated to reside within the primary employability attribute, 'Communication.' This construct is elucidated by the humanities as the capacity of a student to 'communicate effectively in manners that foster productive and harmonious relationships among stakeholders' (Allen Consulting Group, 2006, p. 14). Gondwana University, found in the region of Gadchiroli, operates as an educational establishment where English is chiefly employed for instruction and evaluation.

Methods:

The College of Languages collaborated with a Maharashtrian marketing strategy firm to collect data pertaining to the essential communication competencies necessary for enhancing services to the Arts, Commerce, and Science stakeholders, specifically referring to the students, employers, and, ultimately, the broader community. The company (ACKSolutions) leveraged its network of university clients to gain access to nine firms that embody a diverse array of private and public entities, encompassing large, medium, and small enterprises across pivotal sectors such as financial services, manufacturing, transport and logistics, marketing and communications, and real estate. Such access would typically not have been readily available to the faculty of Humanities, Commerce and Management, or Science and Technology, Social Science, Interdisciplinary Studies, Audit Courses or would have necessitated substantial additional resources. The data collection was conducted in three distinct phases.

Phase 1:

Initially, organizations representative of prospective employers for the alumni of the six Degree programs offered at Gondwana University, Gadchiroli, provide a diverse array of Undergraduate and Postgraduate programs in accordance with the National Education Policy (NEP 2020), encompassing B.A., B.Sc., B.Com, B.E., B.Voc., M.A., M.Sc., M.Com, M.Tech, MBA, and MCA, while emphasizing multidisciplinary education, skill enhancement (such as Bamboo Entrepreneurship), and exit pathways (UG Certificate/Diploma) across the faculties of Science, Arts, Commerce, Engineering, and Education, with specialized tracks in disciplines such as Computer Science, Zoology, Chemistry, and Mechanical Engineering, in alignment with NEP directives. They were discerned utilizing data from the faculties regarding student placements in internships and industry projects. Preliminary contact was established via telecommunication. It was not invariably feasible to engage large corporations in discussions regarding specific competencies related to, for instance, electrical engineering or visual design, as access was often mediated through University Grants Commission regulations. To sum it up, the researcher pinpointed nine organizations throughout different public and private sectors, merging large, medium, and small businesses, hence covering a comprehensive spectrum of commercial fields. These companies expressed their willingness to participate in an initial telephonic interview.

1. Workplace communication culture:

1.1. The scope of worldwide representation in the enterprise and the favoring of English or Marathi as the main language employed for talks.

1.2. The various avenues for dialogue and the main resources used, including online mail, personal exchanges, written communications, and official assemblies.

1.3. The breadth of persistent training strategies carried out by employers, when fitting, intended to boost communication proficiency.

For instance, the absence of workplace readiness or the importance of specific competencies.

Phase 2

Subsequent to the completion of the telephone interviews, simulation scenarios were devised in order to evaluate students' competencies in addressing exemplar workplace situations that had been delineated by employers during Phase 1.

The participants in the simulations were selected from a diverse array of academic disciplines and included third-year students on the cusp of graduation, third-year students who had engaged in industry projects or work placements, as well as first- or second-year students enrolled in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) support courses. In total, seven focus groups were convened employing six distinct workplace scenarios or simulations. The simulations necessitated that participants a) articulate their methodologies, cognitive processes, and strategic approaches in response to the prompts (thereby evidencing through language the cognitive processing and critical analysis essential for effectively managing the situation), and subsequently b) compose a text intended to convey the task requirements to an appropriate audience.

Findings:

The findings have been arranged following the criteria that became apparent through the data acquisition process.

The Array of Communication Approaches Observed in Workplaces:

The integration of international viewpoints, and the choice of English or Marathi as main languages of exchange are significant.Communication cultures exhibit significant variation among different employers. An airline has indicated that its personnel are required to have proficient English abilities for successful interactions with every stakeholder, both outside and within the organization. A logistics firm indicated that, due to its diverse international workforce, English served as the primary language of communication; however, it also acknowledged the critical role of Marathi when interfacing with governmental clients.

Communication Objectives and Main Avenues of Communication:

Based on the insights derived from telephone interviews and focus group discussions, seven fundamental communication tasks were identified: 1. Connecting with external and internal clients/contacts through multiple written communication methods, including emails and letters (for instance, inquiries, complaints, briefs, proposals, and requests). 2. Playing a part in crafting and presenting impactful presentations. 3. Communicating with external participants such as clients, suppliers, or government institutions in personal settings (like hello, inquiries, requests, or objections).

Language Register/Language Proficiency:

Participants recognized an insufficient comprehension of language register, in conjunction with diminished levels of language proficiency, as significant apprehensions for graduates. A participant from one focus group encapsulated the principal concern as:

"An observable discrepancy exists in the communication abilities of recent graduates, especially regarding their capacity to recognize their interlocutors and interact with them in a fitting manner". (Social media marketing representative)

Conclusions:

The inadequate engagement with internal and external stakeholders proficiently and appropriately presents a significant risk for any organization functioning within multicultural or multinational environments, thereby highlighting the necessity for pragmatic and sociolinguistic communicative training for students. This

scholarly inquiry has yielded two principal conclusions. Firstly, the requirements of employers in Maharashtra are aligned with those of the global community in the 21st century: individuals seeking employment are mandated to possess not only the requisite subject knowledge but also the essential communication skills and cognitive strategies imperative for functioning harmoniously and productively within the organizational framework. Secondly, the research has illuminated a concept that is less frequently addressed in academic literature: the premise that before securing employment, job seekers must effectively brand themselves to differentiate from their peers and present themselves as confident, well-informed individuals capable of articulating their value to prospective employers.

The inferences affirm the purpose of Gondwana University, Gadchiroli, which seeks to groom graduates for professional success. However, the implications of these findings also emphasize the significance of English language provision in ensuring that students are not only qualified to engage with degree-level content but also adept at promoting themselves linguistically and sociolinguistically to acquire and maintain employment. These findings suggest that the current provision of English language services within Higher Education Institutions in Gadchiroli must address the expectations from employers for graduates who possess not only technical expertise pertinent to their academic disciplines but also the sociolinguistic competence necessary for interacting with colleagues and clients to advance organizational objectives. While fulfilling these requirements is an institutional obligation, English curriculum designers are optimally positioned to cultivate the requisite understandings and skills necessary, and the insights derived from this research will enable them to identify core competencies that may have traditionally been overlooked from the language education perspective within Higher Education. Successfully addressing this challenge will enhance the ability of Gondwana University graduates to effectively brand themselves and, by extension, promote the NEP courses as well, equipped with the skills and attributes sought by potential employers. Though this investigation has particularly emphasized Maharashtra, it is hypothesized that related research performed nationwide would produce important findings for curriculum planners and educational establishments focused on preparing graduates for career opportunities.

References:

- Archer, Will, et al. *The Council for Industry and Higher Education Graduate Employability: What Do Employers Think and Want?* 25 Feb. 2008, padletuploads.blob.core.windows.net/aws/121351269/ 644ffcff8b983d8ce0107a1fdd1a9ad57a597fbe/7995b50bcaa1c186ed7642b096aaa906.pdf.

- Harvey, Lee. "Defining and Measuring Employability." *Quality in Higher Education*, vol. 7, no. 2, July 2001, pp. 97–109, https://doi.org/10.1080/13538320120059990.

- Lowden, Kevin, et al. *Employers' Perceptions of the Employability Skills of New Graduates*. The SCRE Centre Research Education, 2011.

- Maity, A. (2025). Teacher effectiveness in relation to ICT acquaintance among secondary teachers of Medinipur District of West Bengal: A study on demographic variables. *American Journal of Social and Humanitarian Research,* 6(5), 1108–1118. https://globalresearchnetwork.us/index.php/ajshr/article /view/3641

- Maity, A., et al. (2023). Correlation between study habit, test anxiety and academic achievement of the male and female B.Ed. college students. *Journal for ReAttach Therapy and Developmental Diversities,* 6(9s), 1872–1880. https://doi.org/10.53555/jrtdd.v6i9s.2660

- Maity, A., et al. (2023). Job satisfaction among secondary school teachers in Paschim Medinipur district in the present context. *Journal of Pharmaceutical Negative Results, 14*(3).

- Maity, A., et al. (2024). Exploring multidisciplinary perspectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020: Implications for education, society, and policy reform. *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development, 8*(5), 1303–1307.

- Maity, A., et al. (2026). Attitude towards e-learning: A study on secondary school teachers. *International Journal of Formal Education, 3*(06s), 340–351.

- Maity, A., et al. (2026). Technology, education, and the erosion of social connectedness: A critical examination. *American Journal of Education and Evaluation Studies, 3*(01s), 27–33.

- Maity, A., Sanuar, S., & Ghosh, D. (2024). An assessment of the socio-economic status of the minority girls students at secondary level in Paschim Medinipur district of West Bengal. *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice, 30*(5), 9123–9127. https://doi.org/10.53555/kuey.v30i5.4522

- Maity, N., Maity, A., & Bairagya, S. (2024). Innovation in teaching-learning process: Requirement of the present era. In *Perspective issues and research in teacher education* (ISBN 978-93-92522-26-0).

- Majumder, R., & Bairagya, S. (2025). Attitude towards e-learning: A study on secondary school teachers. *Bharati International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development, 3*(3), 80–88.

- Majumder, R., & Bairagya, S. (2025). Exploring teachers' perceptions on the provisions of NEP 2020 for teachers. *Bharati International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development, 3*(3).

- Roy, S., & Bairagya, S. (2019). Conceptualisation of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) of science from Shulman's notion to Refined Consensus Model (RCM): A journey. *Education India Journal: A Quarterly Refereed Journal of Dialogues on Education, 8*(2), 55–59.

- McLean, Michelle. "Citizens for an Unknown Future: Developing Generic Skills and Capabilities in the Gulf Context." *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Gulf Perspectives*, vol. 7, no. 2, Dec. 2010, pp. 9–31, https://doi.org/10.18538/lthe.v7.n2.44.

- Thomas, Andrew, et al. "English Communication Skills for Employability: The Perspectives of Employers in Bahrain." *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Gulf Perspectives*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2016, https://doi.org/10.18538/lthe.v13.n1.227.