

Activities Conducted on Students from Vernacular Background to Improve Their English Communication.

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Scholars and educators have begun re-evaluating the approaches and objectives of teaching English in diverse contexts due to its widespread usage across various sectors and its status as a global language. This study examined Indian University students' views about the English language and their identity development and negotiation throughout their English language learning process. 25 respondents filled out a questionnaire, which was used to gather data. The study analysed how English is taught and learned in light of students' academic and professional requirements and interests. The study found that students thought activities would help them academically and professionally. Finally, the researcher recommended preparing activity-based teaching materials that fit students' needs and interests.
	Keywords: English teaching, English as a foreign language, English proficiency, Content Learning

Introduction

English has been used extensively and is the most popular language to communicate internationally. It has been utilized in a variety of worldwide contexts. (Crystal, 2003). Non-native English speakers (NNEs) now exceed native English speakers (NESs) as a result of English's globalization (Seidlhofer, 2011). Language ability is no longer evaluated against the standard English norms when English is used for intercultural communication; instead, communication techniques and intelligibility take precedence over the so-called standard English (Rose & Galloway, 2019; Seidlhofer, 2011). Therefore, some academics have started to question the conventional native-oriented approach to English language teaching (ELT) to satisfy the requirements and objectives of English learners worldwide. This is particularly valid for students interacting with individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds via English. The English language and globalisation have increasingly intertwined over the past two decades. The spread of English worldwide has been aided by economic globalisation, which has benefited from the growth of English. (Graddol 1997) He observes in a publication that "English is currently changing national and personal identities across the globe, redrawing political boundaries, generating new global wealth and social exclusion patterns, and proposing new ideas about human rights and civic duties." (Graddol 2006, 12) This study engages the topic of English proficiency as a performance of students. It aims to understand how the students adapt the English language to their routine and prepare themselves for interviews and professional life.

Objective

The main objective of the new Communication skill test for postgraduates is to ascertain their English language ability to cope academically and professionally. Because the literature shows that India is currently a favourite destination for higher education, and the number of students entering the country for this purpose has increased drastically, the language level must be ensured before a candidate can continue to study at the PG level. In addition, this is more than ever vital, seeing that the mode of instruction in most universities (public and private) in India is English. With this objective in mind, the thrust of this study is a description of the process involved in developing the activities of Communication skills for PG purposes.

Literature review

Most studies on the use of SL in language learning focused on linguistic gains and learners' perceptions, with few focusing on communication strategies (Park, 2018; Wang, Lan, et al., 2020). Some research has revealed that SL could stimulate a strategic approach to communication via text chat (Liang, 2012; Peterson, 2010). In the virtual world of Second Life, the study is being done on categorising verbal and nonverbal communication acts and the links among the many actions integrated into the environment. The study demonstrates the value of these for communication in an educational setting. It points out some distinctions between face-to-face communication and the communication modes of the synthetic world. (Wigham & Chanier, 2013) *Communication Strategies* have been defined as a "conscious technique" (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997, p. 184) and as "conscious attempts" (Lafford, 2004, p. 204) used by speakers to deal with communication difficulties (Burch, 2014; Dörnyei & Scott, 1997). Substantial research has been undertaken on the nature, classification and application of communication strategies in second language acquisition in the past 40 years (Matsuoka, 2013). For instance, some strategies (such as paraphrasing and appealing for help) include specific keywords and structures that need to be taught explicitly. Therefore, teaching communication strategies to raise L2 learners' awareness of such strategies would be necessary. Hence, they are willing to take risks and use those strategies in communication (Dörnyei, 1995).

Substantial research has been undertaken on the nature, classification and application of communication strategies in second language acquisition in the past 40 years (Matsuoka, 2013), but mostly in learning English as a second or foreign language. Although teaching communication strategies has been controversial for almost 30 years, many researchers have argued that L2 learners would benefit from explicit instruction on coping with communication problems (Aljohani & Hanna, 2021; Dörnyei, 1995; Maleki, 2007). A different study looks into the demands of MBA students studying business English regarding communication and learning and their opinions on what makes a good curriculum. The study instruments are two-stage surveys with 99 MBA students from a Chinese public institution. (Qing Xie & Jie Chen, 2019). One more Virtual reality (VR) for Language learning effectively improves students' communication skills. The VELLE and Productive Failure design influenced participants' use of various communication strategies. In particular, using L1 in the problem-solving phase enriched the participants' learning opportunities, and all participants used fewer resource deficit-related strategies after the instruction. Second, Students reported enhanced engagement in language use in the VR context. (Hongzhi Yang, Linda Tsung, & Lu Cao)

International research has applied the active learning approach in disciplinary education such as business education (Stinson & Milter, 1996) and cross-cultural team learning (Higgins & Li, 2009). Spooren et al. (2018) argue that an active learning environment is helpful in challenging students and encourages them to join in the learning process. This includes quizzes, role-plays, games, and case-based learning. In political education, decision-making simulation tools are used for students to join learning. Mintzes (2020, p. 9) indicates that "concept testing, constructive knowledge, meta-cognition, problem-based and case learning, interactive learning" can create an active learning environment in a university classroom. Studies in different countries have examined the application of active learning theories in teaching. For example, in Japan, Matsushita (2018, p. 7) indicates that the Japanese education sector has become interested in the active learning approach since 2000. Relevant reports have indicated that active learning enables learners to join the learning process, rather than the teacher having one-sided lecturing. The active learning approach should include "heuristic teaching method, experiential learning, investigative learning, group discussion, debating and small group activities." In Japan, the middle and elementary grades started implementing the active learning concept in 2014. Related research appeared after 2015. In a dental English course, Rodis and Locsin (2019) adopt such active learning approaches as international group discussion, student teacher experience, and role plays. Kim's (2019) research finds that mobile technology and interaction can enhance medical English active learning status in Korea. In Iran, Moghaddas and Khoshsaligheh (2019, p. 190) find that project-based teaching under the active learning framework helps improve the "quality of translation, critical thinking and cooperation."

In the US, Mendez-Carbajo (2020) uses the federal data system to design active learning activities. For soft skills cultivation in the business English curriculum in China, Ding (2011) suggests that the teaching model and ideology should change with improved curriculum and flexible teaching methods to get students more engaged. Wu (2020) argues that business English teaching should focus on cultivating professional skills. The teaching design should align with job needs, and the teaching methods should be more innovative to deepen teaching reform. Shi and Cai (2008) recommend that business English skills training courses align with the job requirements. In the higher vocational business English context, Qian (2020) analyses business English professional skills, including business knowledge, English expressions, and professional quality. Business English should centre on student needs and collaborate with companies.

Moreover, internationally, Dell'Aquila et al. (2017) indicate that digital environment-based games can be used to cultivate professional soft skills. Pfeiffer et al. (2011, p. 302) have categorised the soft skills training courses as "time management, work-life balance, communication and leadership, conflict management, cross-cultural communication and professional socialisation." Pfeiffer et al. (2011) emphasise the importance of cooperation and learning community in soft skills training. Massaro et al. (2016) mention using a soft skills training model to conduct executive training. However, more research still needs to be done on applying specific teaching strategies under active learning theories in university business English teaching to cultivate professional soft

skills. Based on prior research, this study aims to fill the gap by applying a problem-based approach under active learning theories in university business English courses to cultivate professional soft skills.

Statement of the problem

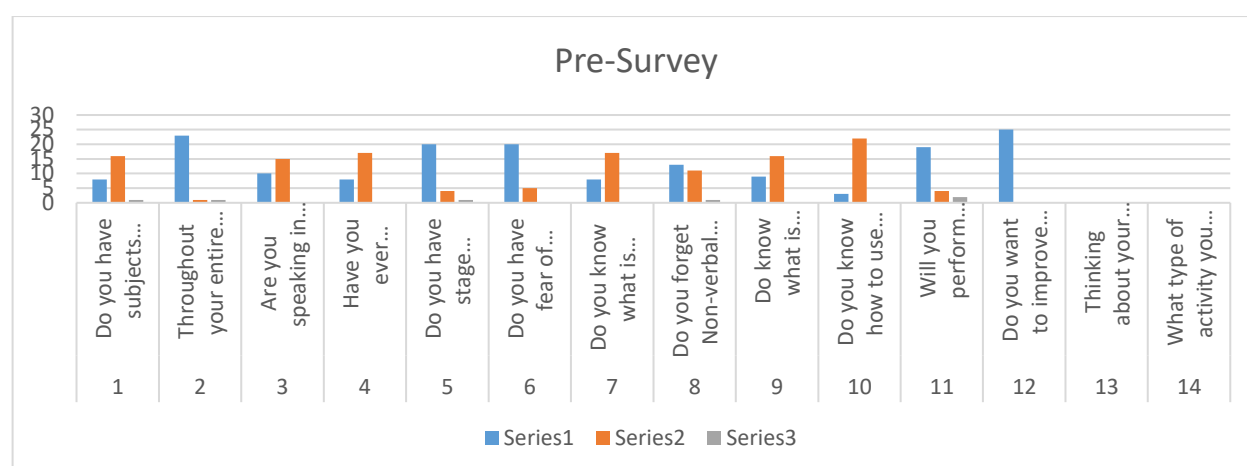
Today, English is widely used in many fields, including business, science, politics, religion, and culture. Given the growth of international communication, English language proficiency is undeniably crucial. The problems were students' low English proficiency, low use of the English language in the class and outside of the class, and the materials needed to have theologically related terminologies. In the same way, one of the reasons for learners' weak communicative skills might be the mismatch between learners' interests and needs and the current contents of English language teaching materials.

Participants

This study was conducted with the participation of a group of students from Indian University, and a convenience sampling method was used. Totally 25 participants from the vernacular background responded to the questionnaire, which was conducted offline. All students are pursuing master's degree programs; when the departments of participating students were examined, few were from Maths, and others were AOC (Advanced Organic Chemistry). All of the participants were between 23 and 25 years old. A pre-survey was conducted to learn about their communication and skills. The questionnaire consists of 14 questions about their viewpoint on the English language and public speaking. Which is shown in table 1:

Table: 1
Pre-Survey

Pre-Survey				
Sr. No.	Question	Yes	No	Can't Say
1	Do you have subjects like Academic Speaking and Presentation Skills in Your Graduation?	8	16	1
2	Throughout your entire Science degree, Do you feel Communication in english is important ?	23	1	1
3	Are you speaking in English Language after your graduation ?	10	15	0
4	Have you ever participated in any Stage activity?	8	17	0
5	Do you have stage Phobia ?	20	4	1
6	Do you have fear of speaking English in public ?	20	5	0
7	Do you know what is Non-Verbal Communication?	8	17	0
8	Do you forget Non-verbal communication on stage?	13	11	1
9	Do know what is Para-language ?	9	16	0
10	Do you know how to use Paralanguage on stage ?	3	22	0
11	Will you perform any stage activity in future?	19	4	2
12	Do you want to improve your communication & Skills ?	25	0	0
13	Thinking about your oral communication rate yourself from 1 to 5. (1- Best 2- Good 3- Average 4- Not good 5- worst)	21 Average, 2 Good, 2 Not Good		
14	What type of activity you would like to have for practice? G.D, Stage Speech, Presentation, Anchoring, General Communication, Understanding of Paralanguage.			



In this survey, 64% of students mentioned that they had never faced a subject related to Academic Speaking as their bachelor did not offer subjects about communication and public speaking, whereas 32% had studied subjects like academic speaking and 4 % needed clarification. Even though most admit speaking in English is essential, they have yet to try or attempt to speak in. In the survey and interaction, they stated that the stage is a place where they feel uncomfortable, and most of them used to forget verbal and non-verbal communication. When faculty members have verbal interaction, they have stated that most of them have stage and public phobia due to this; they used to forget their nonverbal communication and their body language. Though in this semester students were from vernacular backgrounds, they all wanted to improve their communication and skills. They wanted to perform on stage.

Research Question

How to use non-verbal communication?

Use of Soft Skills?

What is the meaning of advanced communication?

What is the impact of Paralanguage on communication?

How to be confident on stage?

How to face any Interview?

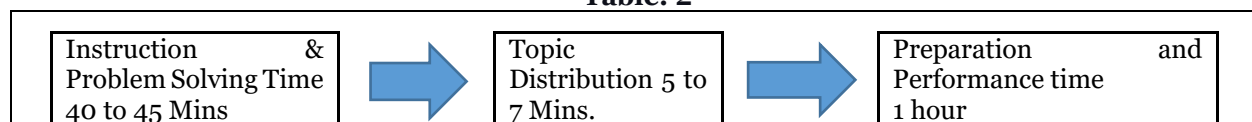
How to develop Presentation Skills?

Research Treatment

Faculty conducted this research in Modern classrooms with facilities like a projector and speakers to show the numbers of PPTs, Video and Audio to listen to and watch the communication techniques from renowned personalities. With this survey, Faculty designed several activities like Self-Introduction, Mini speech, and describing people, places, and things. These activities are performed at the initial stage of the semester (1st Month). Later, as they became familiar with the English language and developed their confidence, the Faculty went with advanced activities like Mini speech, Group Discussion (GD), PPT Presentation, Interview Skills (one to one interview) and Debate. Faculty provided the material and reference books like "The Art of Public Speaking" by Dale Carnegie and J. Berg Esenwein and Ted Talks: Chris Anderson's The Official TED Guide to Public Speaking.

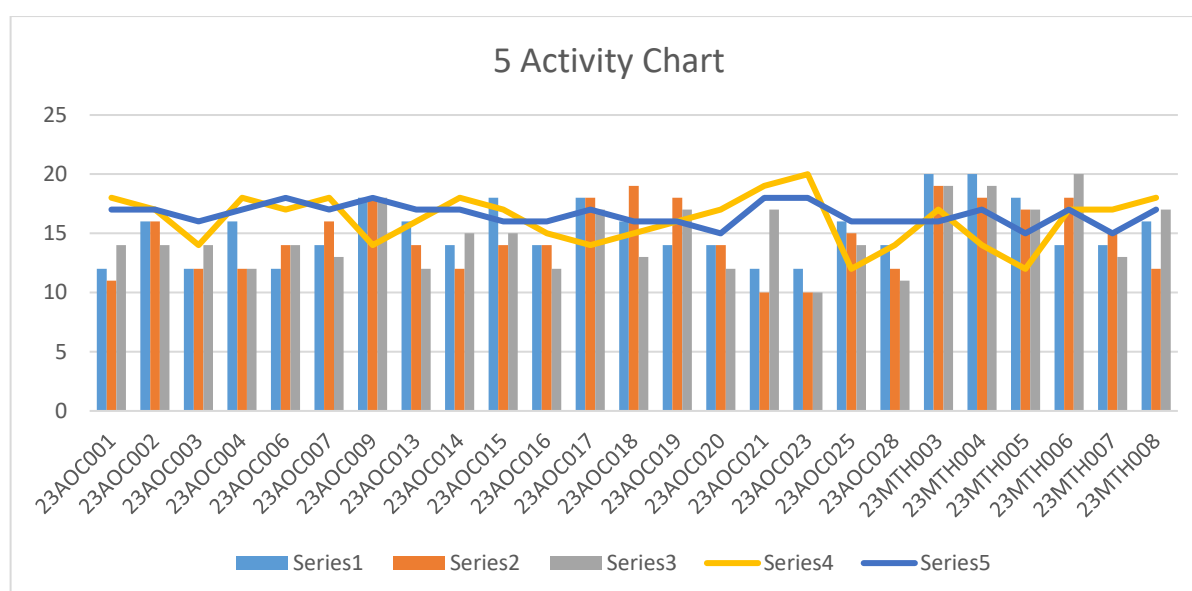
In the beginning, the Faculty took the activity of a 3-minute Self-Introduction and mini-speech on contemporary issues, in which only a few of them were comfortable because they were speaking alone, as we can see in the table, most students are having good marks in an individual activity. When the group were formed for other activities, they become more conscious at the same time nervous because students must perform in groups and match their compatibility with others.

Faculty used to have 2 hours every week for 15 weeks, meaning Faculty has 30 hours of teaching. In every lecture, the teacher directs and teaches the topic for 40-45 min., to teach the techniques of public speaking, interview skills, Group discussion etiquette, debate performance, and stage confidence, and in the second part of the lecture, they perform and act accordingly, as shown in the table: 2:

Table: 2

For topics like presentation skills, topics were given a week prior, and for GD (Group Discussion) and Debate, 20 min. Time was given for preparation in which students were allowed to use their phones to collect data from the internet so that they would have more accurate information for discussion. These four activities took a full 15 lectures, and for each activity, the faculty gave marks out of 20 based on Knowledge, Lexical range, Cohesion Grammatical range, and Verbal and Non-Verbal communication. As the class had limited students, personal attention was being given to each student. They have even enjoyed learning communication and skills. After finishing the lecture Post-test was conducted. There are several implications for teachers from this study. The main category that students identified as more important than teachers is knowledge about oneself–affective variables. This could be primarily a consequence of local culture. This study emphasizes the contradictory emphasis on creating a humorous and exciting class atmosphere. Therefore, more attention should be paid to this to be an effective English language teacher in Gujarat. It may help to have a rudimentary understanding of Gujarati culture and how it manifests in the classroom. This could positively affect rapport, motivation, participation, and teacher evaluation from the students. Furthermore, the need for more emphasis from students on the use of technology, multimedia, and varying teaching methods is essential, as these are areas that many teachers and teacher training courses focus on. It is no longer being suggested that these are not important in classrooms. However, it is interesting to note that students do not hold these in as high regard as teachers.

Marks-Sheet											
#	Student ID	Mini Speech/20	%	GD/20	%	Present ation/20	%	Interview/20	%	Debate/20	%
1	23AOC001	12	60	11	55	14	70	18	90	17	85
2	23AOC002	16	80	16	80	14	70	17	85	17	85
3	23AOC003	12	60	12	60	14	70	14	70	16	80
4	23AOC004	16	80	12	60	12	60	18	90	17	85
5	23AOC006	12	60	14	70	14	70	17	85	18	90
6	23AOC007	14	70	16	80	13	65	18	90	17	85
7	23AOC009	18	90	18	90	18	90	14	70	18	90
8	23AOC013	16	80	14	70	12	60	16	80	17	85
9	23AOC014	14	70	12	60	15	75	18	90	17	85
10	23AOC015	18	90	14	70	15	75	17	85	16	80
11	23AOC016	14	70	14	70	12	60	15	75	16	80
12	23AOC017	18	90	18	90	17	85	14	70	17	85
13	23AOC018	16	80	19	95	13	65	15	75	16	80
14	23AOC019	14	70	18	90	17	85	16	80	16	80
15	23AOC020	14	70	14	70	12	60	17	85	15	75
16	23AOC021	12	60	10	50	17	85	19	95	18	90
17	23AOC023	12	60	10	50	10	50	20	100	18	90
18	23AOC025	16	80	15	75	14	70	12	60	16	80
19	23AOC028	14	70	12	60	11	55	14	70	16	80
20	23MTH003	20	100	19	95	19	95	17	85	16	80
21	23MTH004	20	100	18	90	19	95	14	70	17	85
22	23MTH005	18	90	17	85	17	85	12	60	15	75
23	23MTH006	14	70	18	90	20	100	17	85	17	85
24	23MTH007	14	70	15	75	13	65	17	85	15	75
25	23MTH008	16	80	12	60	17	85	18	90	17	85



Marking with percentages is calculated on a basic Excel sheet. When we go through the evaluation sheet, it is visible that students at the initial stage are only comfortable with individual speech because, with the marks of mini-speech, it is reflected, as they have an average Percentage of mini-speech is approx. 76 percent while in Group discussion average percentage is 73.6. This is visible the they get low down in group activity. However, having the session and direction with the book's reference to increase confidence and develop people skills, a slight change is visible in presentation skills, and the average Percentage is 73.8. when they have been taught Interview skills, individual performance is far better than group activity, and the Percentage is 80.8. In the end, when the faculty conducted one more group activity, the improvement was visible; the average Percentage they got was 83.

Students feel that doing small speeches is a useful activity in which they record the speech or mentally replay it while observing the speaker's tone, body language, and delivery.

Student group discussions can be a great way to get new perspectives and develop personally. Here's how people can learn from a group conversation in an efficient manner:

Engaging in Active Listening:

To completely comprehend the viewpoints of others, practice active listening.

Refrain from planning their reply while someone else is speaking.

Make notes on essential details or intriguing concepts.

Engagement:

Add their ideas and opinions to the conversation.

Provide examples or personal experiences to back up your arguments.

Respect other people's beliefs, even if you disagree with them.

Posing Queries:

Ask questions to elucidate others' arguments or explore a subject in greater detail.

Invite members who are more reserved to speak up by soliciting their opinions.

A more in-depth conversation might result from well-considered questions.

Expanding on Concepts:

Consider how an idea can be improved or expanded upon if presented. Provide helpful criticism or ideas for enhancements. Build on each other's ideas cooperatively to expand the conversation. There is more to learning from a PowerPoint (PPT) presentation than just glancing at the slides. This is a thorough how-to manual for using the knowledge they gained from a PowerPoint presentation: Clearly state your goals for taking away from the presentation, and setting specific goals aids in paying attention to pertinent data. Participate actively in the presentation as opposed to only observing it. It made notes on the main ideas, supporting details, and any questions or ideas that come to mind. When learning from a PowerPoint presentation, one must do more than take in the information—one must actively participate with the material, consider its applicability, and apply newly acquired knowledge. These guidelines will help you get the most out of a PowerPoint presentation and convert it into an insightful educational experience.

Key learning from the Interview Skill:

Body Language:

A solid handshake, eye contact, and proper posture are all important. Genuinely grinning, nod to demonstrate attentive listening. Engaging in Active Listening: Pay close attention to the interviewer's questions before answering. Give a moment to collect your thoughts before responding.

Precision and Succinctness:

Avoid using long-winded or unduly technical language in your comments; be succinct and unambiguous. To demonstrate your views, give instances from your own experience.

Standout Performances:

Highlight your achievements and how they meet the needs of the position. When feasible, put your accomplishments in numerical form (e.g., "Increased sales by 20%").

Remain Upbeat:

Stay upbeat and optimistic during the interview. When talking about obstacles, emphasise how you overcome them.

Resolve Weaknesses:

Be ready to talk about shortcomings or opportunities for development. Present them in a favourable light and discuss efforts to improve.

First Remarks:

Make a compelling opening statement that outlines your position in detail. Recap primary arguments and give a sneak peek at the supporting documentation.

Skills of Listening:

Listen intently to the points made by the other team. Please make a note of their main arguments and any vulnerabilities they may leverage.

Counterargument and Rebuttal:

Address the most vital points raised by the other side in rebuttal. Dispute their claims with reasoning, supporting data, and counterexamples. To make the response stronger, use rhetorical strategies like data or analogies.

Make Use of Examples and Proof:

Provide reliable proof to support claims, such as scholarly articles or professional judgements. To make arguments more accessible and convincing, give instances from real life.

Interact with the Rival Team:

Take part in periods of questioning or cross-examination. Make sure to probe deeply enough to reveal any holes in their reasoning. Answer inquiries aimed at the team with poise and courtesy.

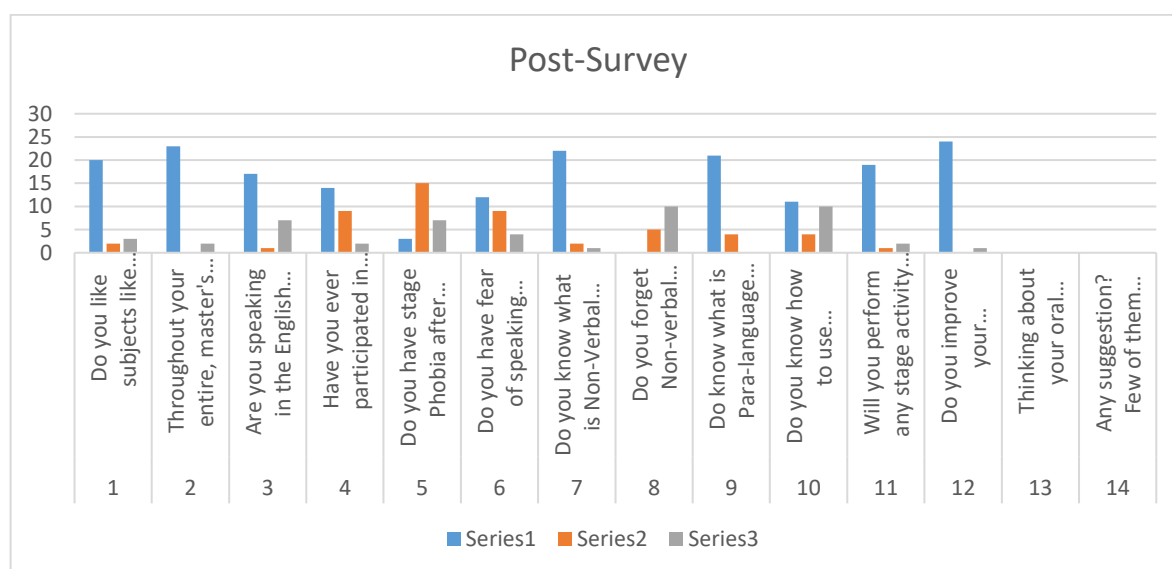
Preserve Professionalism:

Do not belittle others or make personal assaults. Rely less on feelings and more on the arguments and supporting data.

Final Thought:

Conclude with a compelling sentence that encapsulates the main ideas. Give another reason why the point of view is the best and should be accepted.

Post-Survey				
Sr. No.	Question	Yes (Out of 25)	No (Out of 25)	Can't Say (Out of 25)
1	Do you like subjects like Academic Speaking and Presentation Skills in Your Graduation?	20	2	3
2	Throughout your entire, master's degree, Do you feel Communication in English is important?	23	0	2
3	Are you speaking in the English Language after attending the entire semester?	17	1	7
4	Have you ever participated in any Stage activity?	14	9	2
5	Do you have stage Phobia after attending the entire semester?	3	15	7
6	Do you have fear of speaking English in public ?	12	9	4
7	Do you know what is Non-Verbal Communication after attending an entire semester?	22	2	1
8	Do you forget Non-verbal communication on stage?	0	5	10
9	Do know what is Para-language after attending the entire semester ?	21	4	0
10	Do you know how to use Paralanguage on stage ?	11	4	10
11	Will you perform any stage activity in the future?	19	1	2
12	Do you improve your communication & Skills?	24	0	1
13	Thinking about your oral communication rate yourself from 1 to 5. (1- Best 2- Good 3- Average 4- Not good 5- worst)	- Good, 7- Average, 1- Not Good		
14	Any suggestion? Few of them want more lectures and want to improve their vocabulary			



As a result, a similar type of Post-learning feedback is given as above, in which 80% of students liked the subject, 8% did not like it, and 12% were confused. The majority of students feel the importance of the subject. Moreover, 68 % of them communicate in English, which was 40% during the beginning of the semester. At the end of the semester, the stage Phobia was visibly marked down. Each question shows an improvement in students, as they have improved in verbal and non-verbal communication stage confidence in speaking in English. Though the improvement is visible, they have to continue with the practice to become more natural about English.

Conclusion

This study conducted 5 activities of the communication and learning needs of 25 Master students and their perceptions of effective curriculum design. For the central communication and learning needs of M.sc students, it can be concluded for this study context that there needs to be more extensive English use in the workplaces of M.sc students and that most of them use the Gujarati language. Most English usage occurs in foreign communication, where there is more written communication than oral communication. There is also more external than internal communication in English. Only a minority of learners have a direct need for English in work. The most difficult skills for Masters learner is oral communication and listening comprehension, partly due to the need for opportunities to use English. However, there is still a firm need for further practice in English communication. For more effective Masters curriculum design, oral communication activities, particularly with expatriate teachers, are particularly needed, along with other communicative approaches and multimedia learning resources.

Moreover, the Masters courses should connect with real-world practice and be relevant to the job needs. Practical knowledge should be integrated, and the teaching styles should be exciting and humorous. Masters students have gained English communicative competence and better career opportunities through academic speaking and presentation skills courses. This study is based on theories of Academic speaking and presentation skill for specific purposes and educational research. This study summarizes students' diverse learning and communication needs and effective Academic speaking teaching practices to suit the Masters job reality and better facilitate laboratory communicative competence development, ultimately serving economic globalization. The study results significantly impact Academic speaking and presentation skills teaching reform in universities and teaching practices in other educational contexts. The study's results can also inform the future direction of English curriculum development. The study results can also be practical for Academic-speaking teachers and corporate trainers with adult learners. Unlike university students, English teachers can learn how to design effective curricula based on adult learners' diverse needs. The results of the study also have important implications for policymakers. The study's limitations lie in being conducted in only one university context. However, the in-depth investigation process can be replicated in other cultural contexts. Future research can further investigate the implications of higher education internationalization on Academic speaking and presentation skills curricula in terms of how teachers and students can cope with the challenges of economic and educational globalization. Thus, to make English-language learning more in line with the learners' objectives for global communication, the pedagogy model employed in ELT needs to be modified, and the exclusive concentration on ENL needs to be questioned. This change would also encourage students' ownership of the language and help the curricula match real-world applications of English. To compare and gain a deeper comprehension of the connection between attitude and identity, future studies might be carried out in comparable settings both domestically and internationally in India and other countries. Studies that incorporate classroom observations might yield additional insights into how individuals utilize English for intra- and intercultural communication, as well as how the language is now taught in diverse settings.

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