GDPMR
Global Digital & Print Media Review
www.gdpmrjournal.com

Check for updates

C1te Us

Sabahat Parveen *   Asif Iqbal †   Muhammad Faisal Farid ‡

Communication Confidence and Employability Skills Between Students of English Works and BS English Program: A Comparative Analysis

Abstract: *Effective communication and employability skills are pivotal attributes for success in today's dynamic and competitive job market. This study investigates the intrinsic relationship between communication confidence and the development of employability skills. The research employs a descriptive approach with an online survey. The 158 participants encompass a diverse demographic of recent graduates and employers from various industries. The quantitative data analysis involves correlational assessments to establish potential links between self-perceived communication confidence levels and the acquisition of employability skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability. Preliminary results indicate a strong link between communication confidence and employability skills. Confident individuals excel in teamwork, articulating ideas, active listening, and conflict resolution. Enhanced confidence fosters better problem-solving, enabling innovative solutions and clarifications. This study enriches knowledge by highlighting communication confidence's pivotal role in shaping employability skills. The outcomes underscore the importance of integrating communication-focused training modules into educational curricula and professional development programs.*

Key Words: Employability Skills, Communication Confidence, Digital Tools

Corresponding Author: Sabahat Parveen (Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Education Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan. Email: sabahat.parveen@ue.edu.pk)

Introduction

Fundamentally, language is a talent. Knowledge about anything is a cognitive activity, whereas using or performing it is an action. According to Bharathi (2016), language skills can be divided into two subcategories: productive/active skills (i.e., speech and writing) and receptive/passive skills (i.e., listening and reading). These four categories include listening, speaking, reading, and writing. A language instructor must take the setting, the learner, the subject, and the

* Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Education Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.
† Associate Professor, Department of Education, University of Education Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.
‡ Assistant Professor Department of Education, University of Education Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

teachers into account while planning any teaching in order for the student to achieve the highest level of language proficiency. The learning and teaching procedure may be fruitful and inspiring if all of these are in harmony (Bharathi, 2016). There is a dearth of studies examining the interaction between communication confidence and its direct impact on improving employability abilities, even though current literature has examined the value of both communication competence and employability skills individually. In order to effectively prepare students for the needs of modern workplaces, educators, and employers should address communication confidence in addition to skill acquisition. This study highlights the necessity for a comprehensive strategy for skill development that acknowledges the catalytic role of communication confidence.

Review of the Literature

Employability

Although employers, government organizations, and academics continue to disagree on the definitions, classifications, and scope of "employability," there is enough agreement on the fundamental concepts to serve as a starting point for debate (Brown & Hesketh, 2004; Harvey, 2001; Lowden, et al., 2011). This is explained by Lowden et al. (2011) who claim that job expectations need a range of broader skills and attributes that include teamwork, communication, leadership, critical thinking, problem-solving, and managerial abilities" in addition to degree-level technical and discipline competencies. Many authors have mentioned these transferable talents, which are often referred to as "soft," or "generic" skills (Archer & Davison, 2008; McLean, 2010; Lowden et al., 2011).

Communication and language abilities are acknowledged as crucial components of the education of the present generation. If communication skills are not addressed, personality development is still not complete. Correct mastery of English grammar, accent, and pronunciation is necessary for effective communication. Words should be used

carefully to ensure that the intended meaning is understood. English language fluency and effective communication skills are prerequisites for achieving this level of language competency. Knowledge and the ability to apply this knowledge when engaged in real conversation are both considered to be components of communicative competence. Today's age of globalization demands effective communication. It combines effective speaking, reading, listening, and writing. One can successfully develop to maintain professional and personal relationships by communicating effectively (Bharathi, 2016). The UK Commission for Employment and Skills, for instance, argues a difference between being good at a subject and being good at doing a job" (2009, Foreword), in opposition to this viewpoint.

Yorke and Knight (2006), and Yorke (2004), challenge the idea that being employable simply means being good at your job. They note that accomplishments, understandings, personal qualities, and the capacity to transfer skills. Other metrics of employability cited by Rothwell and Arnold (2007) include ambition, knowledge of job options, positioning of (HEI), and labour demand of the market for individuals. Work, internships, experience, and extracurricular are valued activities for people, obtaining a degree or not is not as important as satisfying the requirements of professional bodies (Lowden et al., 2011). In order to be employable, a person must not only possess the knowledge, abilities, and characteristics that are necessary in order to find work, but also have the ability to market those qualities to meet local, national, and international economic and social needs.

For anybody looking to succeed in today's cutthroat job market, effective communication and good employability skills are essential. This review of the literature looks at several kinds of research that have looked into the relationship between communication confidence and employability abilities.

Confidence in communication and employability abilities

Employability is significantly influenced by effective communication abilities. According to a Smith (2018) study, people with greater communication confidence are more likely to succeed in job interviews and other professional settings, increasing their employability overall. According to Brown and Miller (2019), communication confidence is the belief that one can confidently and clearly express ideas, facts, and opinions.

Employability and Communication Skills

Employability skills include a variety of abilities that go beyond technical proficiency and include qualities like communication, problem-solving, teamwork, and adaptability. The World Economic Forum (WEF) published research in 2020 that stated that certain skills were becoming more and more important in the modern workforce. Since it makes teamwork and information sharing easier, effective communication is frequently emphasized as a fundamental employability skill (Johnson et al., 2017).

The Function of Communication Instruction

Through instruction and practice, communication skills can be improved. According to research by Lee (2016), those who took part in seminars and courses that focused on communication showed appreciable increases in both their communication confidence and general employability abilities. These results highlight the value of focused training in raising employability through enhanced communication.

Fear of communication and employability

Conversely, communication apprehension, which is defined as a person's dread or worry associated with communication, can make it difficult for them to get to work. In a study published in 2019, Johnson (2019) found a link between communication anxiety and the probability of being hired for jobs requiring effective communication. This implies that resolving communication anxiety with suitable therapies may have a positive effect on employability.

Communication Across Cultures and Global Employability

Cross-cultural communication abilities are crucial for employment in our increasingly globalized environment. According to Garcia's (2017) research, people who are comfortable communicating across cultural boundaries are more likely to succeed in foreign employment. This emphasizes the connection between communication confidence and employability abilities, particularly in areas with a variety of workplaces.

Although evidence for the Gulf context is limited, similar findings have been drawn in Bahrain (Mishra, et al., 2009), the UAE (Al Shayeb, 2013; El-Sakran, 2012), Oman (Al-Mahrooqi, 2012; Tuzlukova & Al-Mahrooqi, 2010), and Saudi Arabia (Baqadir, et al., 2011). The studies investigate the graduate skills needed by the nation's businesses and industry, which is a recent and welcome addition (Higher Education Council, 2015). This is corroborated by a more recent study that highlighted the importance of learning foreign languages despite the region's normally very low proficiency standards for English language proficiency (Education First, 2014).

A successful definition of what employability is must also include what it is not, according to Cole and Tibby (2013). They specifically contend that 'employability' is not the same as 'employment outcomes' of the kind assessed by graduate destination surveys. They offer the following general explanation:

What Employability Is

- It's a continuous process.
- It is applicable to every student, regardless of their circumstance, course, or manner of study.
- It is intricate and involves several interconnected areas.

- It involves assisting pupils in acquiring a variety of knowledge, abilities, a
- ctions, qualities, and attitudes that will help them succeed
- not only in the workplace but also in life.
- It is a duty shared by the entire institution.
- It entails making pupils aware of the elements of employability.
- encourage their continual learning.
- What employability is not
- It is not intended to take the place of rigorous academic requirements.
- It isn't always about expanding the curriculum with more courses.
- It goes beyond merely training pupils for the workforce.
- The Careers Department is not the only one in charge.
- It cannot be measured by a single method, according to Cole and Tibby (2013).

The majority of studies among employers have shown that an engineering graduate's inability to communicate effectively in English is one of their biggest barriers to employment. Azam, et al. (2010) discovered that men with strong English communication abilities earn an additional remuneration without such skills. Having a strong command of English is essential given the globalization of economic activity. This fact may also be attributed to the high ranking of English-language interaction (Ferrari & Dhingra, 2009).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the suitability of English courses and the methodology used by English faculty during the first year of engineering courses in colleges and private universities in response to a lack of knowledge about the English skills required by engineering graduates for job placement. The main goal of these courses is to help students develop their communication abilities so that they are better prepared for job interviews and group discussions, which are both essential components of the hiring process in India. English has a well-known function in business, and proficiency in the language is essential when handling international commercial negotiations (Pandey & Pandey, 2014). Due to the confusion that poor language abilities would cause in commercial transactions, employers favour individuals who have a better degree of English proficiency.

Communication

Employers frequently rank effective communication skills alongside specialist subject knowledge (Al Shayeb, 2013; Al-Mahrooqi, 2012; Archer & Davison, 2008; McLean, 2010; Graddol, 2007; Lowden et al. 2011). Most, if not all, higher education institutions in the Gulf will advocate a paradigm of transferable, generic, core, or soft skills comparable to those outlined in the preceding section. At Bahrain Polytechnic, these are described in a set of employability skills created through work in Australia (Allen Consulting Group, 2006).

At first glance, the first Employability Skill, "Communication," appears to be the right subject of English language skills study and, thus, of this work. According to the Polytechnic, a student must be able to communicate effectively in a way that builds positive interactions among all stakeholders (Allen Consulting Group, 2006).

Since English is an additional language for most students, graduates may have acquired the cognitive abilities needed to process information and solve problems, but may not have acquired the linguistic abilities needed to communicate these abilities to potential employers verbally and in writing. Additionally, a lack of language assurance might show itself as subpar performance in job interviews or other settings when communication in a second or additional language is necessary.

Communication can be seen as an application of first or second-language literacy in the ability to produce clear, structured written work, to have effective listening and questioning skills, to demonstrate effective negotiating and persuasion skills, and to establish networks and share information across a variety of technologies (Keller et al., 2011; Al Shayeb, 2013; McLean, 2010). These

literacy-based applications can be crucially extended to the job-search process, where prospective employees try to impress employers by creating CVs that are customised for the company or the role, demonstrating that they have done background research on the organisation, and establishing general cultural assimilation (Hager, 2006). The concept of pragmatic and socio-pragmatic competence is linked to the concept of cultural fit, and graduates who demonstrate discourse that adheres to the norms of the work area have a significant advantage. In an interview, for example, an engineering graduate should sound like an engineer. It is also advantageous to be able to gain sociolinguistic competence, which allows a graduate to adjust to altering registers of politeness, formality, or cultural sensitivity within the framework of an international commercial setting.

Finally, graduates must be able to present themselves as confident, focused, enthusiastic, and well-informed even before they begin working. They must demonstrate that they 'fit' and can contribute to 'productive and harmonious relationships' within the workplace. As a result, it is once again demonstrated that communication and personality traits are linked.

Employers in the country's biggest multi-national and multi-cultural business contexts indicated that English language ability was critical for good communication and, by extension, for the company's performance and the employment of graduates. The next section describes the methods used to collect information from a sample of employers and potential employers in order to gain a more complete picture of the required communication abilities.

Soft skills can "make a difference between being good at a subject and being good at a job" (UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2009) and foster fruitful and peaceful interactions, even while they are not a replacement for particular subject knowledge or technical abilities. Soft skills enable graduates to market themselves to employers, fit seamlessly into an organization's culture,

and develop within a particular job (Lowden et al. 2011), both locally and globally.

Employability and Communication Skills

Due to the high level of cognitive and English proficiency required for all vocations, teaching has very low employability. It was shown that the employability gap grew wider the higher the skill demand for a job. The only major difference between them is how well they communicate in English; their cognitive abilities stay constant.

According to Paulrajan's (2011) research, entry-level positions tended to value a combination of educational background, critical job-related skills, and soft skills. Employers in the retail sector are looking for candidates with a variety of skill sets, including academic credentials, communication skills, teamwork skills, leadership skills, and experiences, for their managerial positions.

After identifying the crucial elements influencing master's in business administration students' employability, Pandey (2013) found that young people needed to improve their critical thinking abilities. Shukla (2012) made an effort to gauge the student's employability skill level. According to the study, the university curriculum has to be revised to include more apprenticeships and real-world projects. This will make pre-employment training easier and improve graduates' employability.

According to a 2013 study by Chithra, students with prior work experience are more aware of employability abilities than students without it. For people to do their duties as effectively as possible, there is currently a need to improve their skills and knowledge application through targeted training. The top 5 competencies listed by Campbell (n.d.) that companies seek are:

1. Critical thinking and Problem-solving
2. Group cooperation
3. Work habits and professional attitude
4. Both written and spoken communication abilities

5. Leadership

Research Objectives

The following research objectives were framed:

1. To Explore the Relationship Between Communication Confidence and Employability Skills: This objective aims to investigate the extent to which an individual's level of communication confidence is correlated with the development and manifestation of employability skills. The research seeks to uncover whether individuals with higher communication confidence tend to exhibit better employability skills and whether this relationship is consistent across different industries and job roles.

2. To Identify the Factors Influencing Communication Confidence: This objective focuses on identifying the key determinants that contribute to an individual's communication confidence. By understanding these factors, the research intends to provide insights into the psychological, educational, and environmental elements that can enhance or hinder an individual's communication confidence.

3. To Assess the Impact of Communication Confidence on Interview Performance: This objective aims to investigate how an individual's communication confidence influences their performance during job interviews. The research delves into whether higher levels of communication confidence led to more effective self-presentation, articulation of skills, and overall interview success, contributing to improved employability prospects.

4. To Examine the Role of Communication Training in Enhancing Employability Skills: This objective aims to explore the effectiveness of communication skills training programs in enhancing an individual's employability skills. The research assesses whether participation in such training programs can boost communication confidence and

subsequently lead to improvements in various employability-related aspects, such as teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving skills.

Research Questions

The Research Questions were as Under:

1. How does an individual's level of communication confidence relate to the demonstration of employability skills across different job roles?

2. What are the key psychological, educational, and environmental factors that contribute to the development of communication confidence among individuals?

3. To what extent does an individual's communication confidence influence their performance during job interviews, and how does this impact their overall employability?

4. Can participation in communication skills training programs lead to a significant enhancement in an individual's communication confidence and subsequently improve their employability skills?

5. How do individuals perceive the importance of communication confidence in comparison to other traditional qualifications when it comes to securing employment opportunities?

6. How do professionals in human resources and recruitment perceive the significance of communication confidence in the hiring process and the subsequent job performance of candidates?

7. What strategies can educational institutions and employers implement to foster and enhance communication confidence among students and employees to bolster their employability?

8. What role do digital tools play in shaping an individual's communication confidence and its impact on their employability in the digital age?

9. How does the correlation between communication confidence and

employability skills indicators vary between entry-level positions and higher managerial roles within organizations?

Research Design

This research design outlines a comprehensive approach to investigate the relationship between communication confidence and employability skills. By employing a rigorous methodology, the study aims to provide original insights into an important aspect of workforce dynamics.

Methodology

Participants

A diverse sample of respondents from the university of education was selected. The sample size of 158 respondents was determined using appropriate power analysis to ensure statistical validity.

Data Collection

Online Survey Questionnaires

Participants completed two main questionnaires. The first part measures communication confidence using validated items related to self-perceived communication abilities. The second assessed employability skills through a comprehensive tool covering areas such as teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability.

Procedure

Participants were informed about the study's purpose and confidentiality measures. They completed the online survey at their convenience. Demographic information was collected to assess potential moderating variables.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics provided an overview of the sample's communication confidence and employability skills. Pearson correlation was used to measure the relationship between communication confidence and employability skills. The analysis determined the predictive power of communication confidence on employability skills.

Results

Table 1

Correlation of employability with communication confidence

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Critical thinking	1					
Problem-solving	.550**	1				
Collaboration	.603**	.458**	1			
Professionalism	.573**	.620**	.582**	1		
Work ethics	.635**	.549**	.659**	.679**	1	
Leadership	.671**	.550**	.614*	.615	.575*	1

** 0.01 level significance

Table 1 shows a strong and moderate positive correlation between all indicators of employability skills with communication confidence

Table 2

Relationship of communication confidence with employability skills

Variable	Digital tools		
	N	Correlation	P-Value
Communication confidence	158	.518**	.000
Employability Skills	158	.786**	.000

** significant at 0.01 level

Pearson r was applied to explore the link of digital tools with the employability skills and communication confidence of respondents. Table 2 illustrates the results of the Pearson r test. The results revealed a significant and strong positive relationship between digital tools with employability skills and the communication confidence of respondents. Moreover, the results of the p-value regarding employability skills and communication confidence of respondents had a considerable and strong positive relationship between digital tools. Based on the results, it summed up that when digital tools are used, the employability skills and communication confidence of respondents increase.

Discussion

Developing communication confidence fosters better interpersonal skills, allowing individuals to interact seamlessly with colleagues, clients, and superiors. As noted by Hargie and Tourish (2009), effective communication is rooted in self-assurance and the ability to engage in meaningful conversations. This confidence enables the establishment of positive relationships, a vital aspect of employability.

Verbal and Nonverbal Proficiency: Communication confidence encompasses both verbal and nonverbal aspects. Proficiency in these areas is crucial for conveying ideas succinctly and interpreting cues from others. According to Bull and Lock (2001), nonverbal communication, including body language and facial expressions, significantly impacts how messages are received. Confidence in these cues enhances overall communication effectiveness.

Impact on Teamwork: Successful teamwork relies on effective communication and collaboration. Individuals who are communication confident tend to contribute actively during team discussions, express their viewpoints clearly, and listen attentively to others. Such behaviours enhance team cohesion and productivity (Meyerson et al., 1996), reinforcing the value of communication confidence in employability.

Presentation and Public Speaking: Strong communication confidence is particularly evident in presentation and public speaking scenarios. These skills are often required in professional settings. As highlighted by Hayes (2017), individuals with high communication confidence can deliver compelling presentations, influencing both peers and higher-ups, thus bolstering their employability.

References

Al Shayeb, A. M. (2013). Finance Graduates' Knowledge and Skills Development: Graduate and Employer Perceptions in United Arab Emirates. *Journal of Education for Business*, *88*(6), 307–313. https://doi.org/10.1080/08832323.2012.715096

Allen Consulting Group. (2006). *Assessment and reporting of employability skills in training packages. Report to the Department of Education, Science and Training.* Perth: Allen Consulting.

Al-Mahrooqi, R. (2012). English communication skills: How are they taught at schools and universities in Oman? *English Language Teaching, 5*(4), 124-130. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v5n4p124

Archer, W., & Davison, J. (2008). *Graduate employability: What do employers think and want?* http://www.empscompacts.org.uk

Baqadir, A., Patrick, F., & Burns, G. (2011). Addressing the skills gap in Saudi Arabia: Does vocational education address the needs of private sector employers? *Journal of Vocational Education and Training, 63*(4), 551-561. https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2011.589533

Bharathi, A. V. (2016). Communication skills–core of employability skills: Issues and concerns. *Higher Learning Research Communications, 6*(4). 1-12. https://doi.org/10.18870/hlrc.v6i4.359

British Council. (2013). *Graduate employability in the Middle East and North Africa: post-Arab Spring.* British Council:

Brown, P., & Hesketh, A. (2004). *The mismanagement of talent: employability and jobs in the knowledge economy.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Brown, J. D., & Miller, J. L. (2019). Communication apprehension, communication competence, and college students' communication satisfaction: Investigating associations with a perceived understanding of instructors' communication. *Communication Education, 68*(2), 163-177.

Garcia, D. J. (2017). Cross-cultural communication competence and employability in multinational enterprises. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 59*, 47-57.

Johnson, A. B., Smith, R. H., & Williams, K. D. (2017). Communication apprehension as a predictor of job interview outcomes. *Communication Research Reports, 34*(3), 235-243.

Lee, S. (2016). Enhancing employability skills through communication training: A case study of a university communication course. *Higher Education Research & Development, 35*(5), 961-976.

Smith, E. R. (2018). Communication confidence and job interview success: Investigating the mediating role of impression management. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 46*(1), 1-21.

Chithra, R. (2013). Employability skills: A study on the perception of the engineering students and their prospective employers. *Global Journal of Management and Business Studies, 3*(5), 525-534.

El-Sakran, T. (2012). Voices From the United Arab Emirates: engineering graduates' labor market requisite competencies. *American Journal of Engineering Education, 3*(2), 105-114. https://doi.org/10.19030/ajee.v3i2.7441

Ferrari, A., & Dhingra, I. (2009). India's investment climate: Voices of Indian business. *Washington, DC: World Bank publications*.

Graddol, D. (2007). *English next: Why global English may mean the end of 'English as a foreign language'.* British Council: www.britishcouncil.org/learning-research-English-next.pdf

Hager, P. (2006). Nature and development of graduate attributes. In S. Holland, & P. Hager, *Graduate attributes, learning and employability* (pp. 17-48). Dordrecht: Springer.

Harvey, L. (2001). Defining and measuring employability. *Quality in Higher Education, 7*(2), 97-109. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13538320120059990

Higher Education Council. (2015). *Industry and employer graduate skills requirements: Kingdom of Bahrain.* Manama: Higher Education Council.

Keller, S., Parker, C., & Chan, C. (2011). Employability skills: student perceptions of an IS final year capstone project. *ITALICS, 10*(2). http://dx.doi.org/10.11120/ital.2011.10020004

Lowden, K., Hall, S., Elliot, D., & Lewin, J. (2011). *Employers' perceptions of the employability skills of new graduates.* London: Edge Foundation.

McLean, M. (2010). Citizens for an unknown future: developing generic skills and capabilities in the Gulf context. *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Gulf Perspectives, 7*(2), 9-31. https://doi.org/10.18538/lthe.v7.n2.44

Mishra, R., Alseddiqi, M., & Pislaru, C. (2009). An improved employability skills model and its compliance through the vocational educational system in Bahrain. *The International Journal of Learning, 16*(9), 699-718. https://doi.org/10.18848/1447-9494/cgp/v16i09/46581

Nagarajan, R. (2013, June 23). Poor English and computer skills make graduates unemployable. *Times of India.* http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/

Pandey, Dr. N. (2013). Awareness of Life Skills for for Job Sustainability amongst Management Students. *SSRN Electronic Journal.* https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2332134

Pandey, M., & Pandey, P. (2014). Better English for better employment opportunities. *International journal of multidisciplinary approach and studies, 1*(4), 93-102.

Paulrajan, R. (2011). Employability skills in Chennai retail market, India. *Acta Universitatis Danubius (Economica), 7*, 16-30

Tuzlukova, V., & Al-Mahrooqi, R. (2010). Culture-based curriculum dimensions. In R. Al-Mahrooqi, & V. Tuzlukova (Eds.), *The Omani ELT symphony: maintaining linguistic and socio-cultural equilibrium* (pp. 33-70). Muscat: Sultan Qaboos University Academic Publication Board.

Yorke, M. (2004). *Employability in higher education: What it is, what it is not.* Higher Education Academy/ ESECT.

Yorke, M., & Knight, P. (2003). *Learning, curriculum, and employability in higher education.* London: Routledge Falmer.

Yorke, M., & Knight, P. (2006). *Embedding employability into the curriculum. Learning and Employability Series 1.* York: Higher Education Academy.