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Research Article

Workplace Communication Challenges Faced by ESL Youth in Bhopal

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Abstract

English proficiency plays a crucial role in determining employability, job performance, and career advancement in the contemporary workplace. In India, a large number of young professionals enter the workforce with English as a Second Language (ESL), often encountering significant communication challenges. The present study aims to examine the workplace communication challenges faced by ESL youth in Bhopal district, with special emphasis on spoken, written, and interpersonal communication skills. Using a descriptive and analytical research design, data were collected from ESL youth employed in various sectors such as corporate offices, service industries, and informal workplaces through questionnaires and interviews. The study identifies major challenges, including lack of fluency, pronunciation difficulties, limited vocabulary, grammatical inaccuracies, fear of interaction with seniors and clients, and communication anxiety. Findings reveal that inadequate exposure to practical English during formal education and socio-linguistic factors significantly hinder effective workplace communication. The study emphasises the need for workplace-oriented English training programs, curriculum reforms, and employer-supported language development initiatives. This research contributes to understanding the gap between academic English learning and professional communication requirements and offers practical recommendations to enhance workplace communication competence among ESL youth.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of English as a Second Language (ESL) in India

India is a linguistically diverse country where English functions as a second language for the majority of the population. Introduced during the British colonial period, English gradually became an important language of administration, higher education, and interregional communication. Even after independence, it retained its significance as a link language across different states and linguistic communities. In the Indian education system, English is largely taught as a subject with greater emphasis on grammar, reading, and writing for examinations rather than on spoken and practical communication. As a result, many learners acquire theoretical knowledge of English but lack communicative competence. This limitation becomes evident when students transition from academic environments to professional settings, where functional and fluent use of English is required.

1.2 Importance of English in the Modern Workplace

In the contemporary globalised world, English has emerged as the dominant language of professional and workplace communication. It is widely used in corporate offices, service industries, government organisations, and multinational companies. English proficiency is essential for participating in meetings, communicating with clients and colleagues, preparing professional documents, and engaging in teamwork. In many workplaces, effective communication in English is directly associated with professionalism, efficiency, and leadership qualities. Lack of proficiency often leads to misunderstandings, reduced confidence, limited participation, and restricted career growth. Therefore, English communication skills have become a crucial component of employability and workplace success.

1.3 Growing Participation of Youth in Various Work Sectors in Bhopal

Bhopal, the capital city of Madhya Pradesh, has witnessed significant growth in educational institutions, corporate offices, service industries, and informal employment sectors. A large number of youth from diverse socio-economic and educational backgrounds are entering the workforce in areas such as banking, healthcare, education, retail, hospitality, and customer service. Many of these young employees come from Hindi-medium or regional-language educational backgrounds and are first-generation English learners. While the workplace demands functional use of English, these youth often struggle to meet communication expectations due to limited exposure and a lack of practical training in English during their academic years.

1.4 Rationale for Selecting Bhopal District as the Study Area

The selection of the Bhopal district for the present study is based on its representative socio-linguistic and educational profile. The district includes urban, semi-urban, and rural populations, offering a wide range of employment opportunities and linguistic diversity. Bhopal attracts youth from surrounding regions for education and employment, making it an ideal

setting to study ESL-related workplace challenges. Despite the presence of colleges and universities, there exists a noticeable gap between academic English instruction and workplace communication requirements. The limited availability of region-specific studies on workplace communication challenges among ESL youth further justifies the need for focused research in this district.

1.5 Overview of Workplace Communication Challenges Faced by ESL Youth

ESL youth in the workplace encounter several communication-related challenges that affect their professional performance and confidence. These challenges include a lack of fluency in spoken English, pronunciation difficulties influenced by mother tongue interference, limited vocabulary, and frequent grammatical errors. Writing professional emails, reports, and official documents also poses difficulties for many young employees. Psychological factors such as fear of making mistakes, communication anxiety, and low self-confidence further hinder effective interaction with seniors, colleagues, and clients. Additionally, the absence of an English-speaking environment and limited practice opportunities exacerbate these issues. These challenges not only impact individual job performance but also influence overall workplace efficiency and career progression, highlighting the need for systematic intervention and support.

2. Statement of the Problem

2.1 Gap between Academic English Learning and Workplace Communication Demands

The English language curriculum in Indian educational institutions primarily focuses on theoretical knowledge, examination-oriented learning, and written grammar-based proficiency. Students are trained to read texts, answer questions, and write structured responses for academic evaluation, while limited attention is given to developing real-life communicative competence. As a result, when ESL learners enter the workplace, they find themselves unprepared to meet practical communication demands such as participating in meetings, interacting with clients, making presentations, and handling professional correspondence. This gap between academic English learning and workplace communication requirements creates significant challenges for youth, affecting their confidence and performance in professional environments.

2.2 Inadequate Exposure to Practical Communication Skills

One of the major problems faced by ESL youth is the lack of adequate exposure to practical communication during their academic years. Most learners have limited opportunities to practice spoken English, engage in group discussions, or participate in professional simulations such as role plays and presentations. English is often confined to the classroom and used minimally outside academic settings. Consequently, youth entering the workforce struggle with spontaneous conversation, formal interaction, and workplace-specific vocabulary. The absence of communication-focused training results in

hesitation, frequent errors, and reliance on code-switching, which negatively impacts workplace effectiveness.

2.3 Linguistic and Psychological Barriers Affecting ESL Youth

In addition to linguistic limitations, ESL youth face several psychological barriers that hinder effective workplace communication. Linguistic challenges such as mother tongue interference, incorrect pronunciation, limited vocabulary, and grammatical inaccuracies affect clarity and fluency. Psychological factors, including fear of making mistakes, communication anxiety, low self-esteem, and lack of confidence, further intensify these difficulties. Many young employees avoid speaking in meetings or interacting with seniors due to the fear of being judged, which restricts their participation and professional growth. These combined linguistic and psychological barriers create a cycle of avoidance and underperformance in workplace communication.

2.4 Need to Identify Specific Challenges in the Bhopal Workplace Context

Although workplace communication challenges among ESL learners have been widely discussed at a national level, there is a lack of region-specific studies focusing on cities like Bhopal. The socio-linguistic environment, educational background, and employment patterns of youth in Bhopal present unique challenges that require localised investigation. Identifying the specific communication difficulties faced by ESL youth in various sectors within Bhopal is essential for designing effective training programs, curriculum reforms, and employer-led interventions. Therefore, the present study seeks to address this research gap by systematically examining workplace communication challenges faced by ESL youth in the Bhopal district.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

3.1 To Identify Major Workplace Communication Challenges Faced by ESL Youth in Bhopal

The first objective of the study is to identify the major workplace communication challenges experienced by ESL youth working in different sectors in Bhopal. These challenges may include difficulties in speaking fluently, pronunciation influenced by mother tongue, limited vocabulary, grammatical errors, and problems in professional writing, such as emails and reports. For example, many youth working in customer service centres, banks, or private offices in Bhopal hesitate to communicate with clients in English and often switch to Hindi due to a lack of confidence. Identifying these challenges will help in understanding the nature and extent of communication problems faced by ESL youth in real workplace situations.

3.2 To Examine the Impact of Limited English Proficiency on Job Performance

This objective aims to examine how limited English proficiency affects the job performance of ESL youth in the workplace. In the Indian context, many employers associate effective English communication with professionalism and efficiency. For

instance, a young employee in a corporate office may possess strong technical skills but may struggle to present ideas during meetings or write formal emails, leading to miscommunication and reduced visibility at work. Similarly, in sectors such as hospitality or healthcare, poor English communication can affect service quality and client satisfaction. The study seeks to analyse how such limitations influence productivity, confidence, and career growth.

3.3 To Analyse the Role of Educational Background in Workplace Communication

The study also aims to analyse how educational background influences workplace communication skills among ESL youth. In India, students from English-medium schools often have greater exposure to spoken English compared to those from Hindi-medium or regional-language institutions. For example, youth educated in government colleges or rural schools in Madhya Pradesh may find it more challenging to adapt to English-dominated workplace environments than those from private English-medium institutions. This objective seeks to examine the relationship between medium of instruction, type of institution, and the level of communication challenges faced by ESL youth in Bhopal.

3.4 To Study Employer Expectations Regarding English Communication Skills

Another important objective is to study employer expectations related to English communication skills in the workplace. In the Indian corporate and service sectors, employers increasingly expect employees to communicate clearly and confidently in English, irrespective of their job roles. For example, employers in private companies in Bhopal often expect even entry-level employees to handle emails, interact with clients, and participate in meetings in English. This objective aims to understand the gap between employer expectations and the actual communication abilities of ESL youth, highlighting areas where training and support are required.

3.5 To Suggest Remedial Measures for Improving Workplace Communication

The final objective of the study is to suggest practical and context-specific remedial measures to improve workplace communication among ESL youth in Bhopal. These may include introducing workplace-oriented English training programs in colleges, organising communication skills workshops, encouraging employers to provide language support and mentoring, and promoting the use of digital learning tools. For example, short-term spoken English and professional communication courses tailored to the Indian workplace needs can significantly enhance confidence and competence among youth. The study aims to offer realistic and implementable suggestions that can bridge the gap between academic English learning and workplace communication demands in the Indian context.

4. Research Questions and Hypotheses

4.1 Research Questions

The present study is guided by the following research questions, which aim to explore and analyse workplace communication challenges faced by ESL youth in the Bhopal district in a comprehensive manner:

4.1.1 What types of communication difficulties do ESL youth face in the workplace?

This question seeks to identify the various forms of communication difficulties experienced by ESL youth in professional settings. These may include problems related to spoken communication, such as lack of fluency, hesitation, incorrect pronunciation, and grammatical errors, as well as difficulties in understanding workplace instructions, professional vocabulary, and formal discourse. It also examines challenges in written communication, including drafting emails, reports, and official documents. The question further explores interpersonal communication issues such as participating in meetings, interacting with seniors, and handling client conversations.

4.1.2 How does a lack of English proficiency affect the confidence and productivity of ESL youth at the workplace?

This research question focuses on the psychological and performance-related impact of limited English proficiency. It aims to examine how inadequate communication skills influence self-confidence, willingness to participate in discussions, and ability to express ideas clearly. In the workplace, poor English proficiency may lead to fear of speaking, communication anxiety, and avoidance of responsibilities involving interaction. This question also explores how such limitations affect productivity, teamwork, efficiency, and overall job performance.

4.1.3 Is there a significant relationship between educational background and workplace communication challenges faced by ESL youth?

This question investigates the influence of educational background on workplace communication abilities. It seeks to analyse whether factors such as medium of instruction (English-medium vs Hindi-medium), type of institution (government or private), and level of exposure to spoken English during education contribute to differences in communication challenges. The question aims to determine whether ESL youth from certain educational backgrounds face greater difficulties in adapting to English-dominated workplace environments.

4.1.4 Do workplace communication challenges influence the career growth and professional development of ESL youth?

This question examines the long-term consequences of workplace communication challenges on career progression. It explores whether difficulties in English communication limit opportunities for promotion, leadership roles, training programs, and professional recognition. The question also

considers how communication barriers may affect performance evaluations, job satisfaction, and long-term employability in competitive professional environments.

4.2 Hypotheses

Based on the objectives and research questions of the study, the following hypotheses have been formulated for empirical testing:

H₁: ESL youth face significant communication barriers in professional environments.

This hypothesis assumes that ESL youth working in various sectors in Bhopal encounter notable difficulties in spoken, written, and interpersonal communication due to limited exposure to practical English usage and workplace-specific language demands.

H₂: Poor English communication skills negatively affect the employability and job performance of ESL youth.

This hypothesis proposes that limited proficiency in English leads to reduced job efficiency, lower confidence, restricted participation in workplace activities, and fewer career advancement opportunities. It suggests that communication skills play a crucial role in determining professional success.

H₃: Educational background has a significant impact on workplace communication challenges faced by ESL youth.

This hypothesis suggests that ESL youth from Hindi-medium or regional-language educational backgrounds experience greater communication difficulties compared to those from English-medium institutions, due to differences in exposure and practice.

H₄: Workplace communication challenges significantly influence career growth and professional advancement.

This hypothesis assumes that persistent communication barriers in English restrict promotion opportunities, leadership roles, and long-term career development for ESL youth in the workplace.

5. Review of Related Literature

A thorough review of existing literature is essential to establish the foundation and academic context for the present study on workplace communication challenges faced by ESL youth in Bhopal. The following sections summarise key findings from related research, highlighting both national and international perspectives, the role of language competence in employability, and identifying gaps that justify this investigation.

5.1 Studies on ESL Learning and Workplace Communication

Research on English as a Second Language (ESL) emphasises that classroom-based English teaching in many countries, including India, often focuses on grammar and reading rather than on communicative competence crucial for real-world use. Scholars have consistently pointed out that traditional ESL instruction fails to equip learners with the practical communication skills required in professional settings. For example, studies conducted in various parts of the world indicate that ESL learners struggle with spoken English, listening comprehension, and professional discourse when

transitioning to workplace environments. These studies show that learners may achieve satisfactory academic performance yet lack the confidence and fluency needed for effective workplace communication.

International research has also highlighted that workplace communication extends beyond linguistic proficiency to include pragmatic and socio-cultural competencies. Successful communication in professional environments often involves understanding industry-specific terminology, interacting with diverse groups, and responding appropriately to situational demands. However, several ESL learners continue to face difficulty in these areas due to limited exposure to authentic English use during their education.

5.2 Research on Employability Skills and Language Competence

A growing body of literature emphasises the critical role of English language competence as a core component of employability skills. In many globalised economies, employers prioritise candidates who demonstrate not only technical expertise but also effective communication abilities. Research studies highlight a strong correlation between English proficiency and employment outcomes, where individuals with stronger language skills are better positioned to secure job opportunities, perform effectively, and advance in their careers. In the Indian context, several scholars have noted that English language ability frequently influences recruitment, training, and promotion decisions in both public and private sectors. Studies have reported that employers perceive strong communication skills as indicative of professionalism, leadership potential, and adaptability. This body of research also indicates that ESL learners who lack adequate English skills may face discrimination during hiring processes and may find it difficult to meet workplace expectations, especially in client-facing roles or competitive industries.

5.3 Indian and Global Perspectives on ESL Challenges

Indian research on ESL learners reveals that the language learning environment significantly affects learners' communicative outcomes. Many studies in India have identified factors such as mother tongue interference, limited classroom interaction, large class sizes, and lack of communicative teaching methods as major barriers to English learning. Research conducted in metropolitan and non-metropolitan regions of India points to a persistent divide between English-medium and regional-medium learners, with the latter often facing greater challenges in professional contexts.

Global perspectives on ESL challenges align with Indian findings, emphasising that ESL learners in non-native contexts encounter similar difficulties in countries like China, Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia. These challenges include anxiety about speaking English, limited vocabulary for professional settings, and difficulty switching from academic to workplace language use. International studies also underscore the importance of incorporating communicative and task-based language instruction to bridge the gap between academic learning and practical use.

5.4 Identified Research Gaps in Regional and Youth-Focused Studies

While the above literature highlights broad trends and challenges related to ESL learning and workplace communication, several gaps remain, particularly regarding localised investigations and youth-focused studies:

Regional focus: Most existing research on ESL challenges in India has been conducted in large metropolitan areas like Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore. Limited studies have focused on smaller cities such as Bhopal, which have distinct socio-linguistic profiles and employment landscapes.

Youth-specific studies: Although studies examine ESL proficiency and employability skills in general, fewer research efforts specifically target young professionals and their real-life communication experiences in the workplace. Youth entering the job market encounter unique pressures related to career expectations, self-confidence, and professional identity formation.

Workplace context: Much of the existing literature centres on academic English learning or general language competence without adequately addressing the transition to workplace communication demands. There is a need for research that explores how ESL learners adapt their language skills to authentic workplace scenarios, especially in regional contexts like Bhopal.

Sector-specific insights: Few studies differentiate between communication challenges across various employment sectors (e.g., corporate, service, informal economy). Understanding sectoral variations can provide more nuanced insights for training and policy interventions.

5.5 Summary of Literature Review Gaps

In summary, while existing literature provides valuable insights into ESL learning difficulties and the role of language in employability, it reveals important gaps that the present study aims to address:

Lack of research focused on ESL youth in non-metro urban centres like Bhopal

Insufficient exploration of workplace-specific communication challenges

Limited attention to the combined effects of educational background, socio-cultural factors, and workplace expectations

Need for empirical studies that connect theoretical insights with practical workplace scenarios

By situating the present research within these identified gaps, the study aims to contribute meaningfully to both academic scholarship and practical initiatives for improving workplace communication skills among ESL youth in the Indian context.

6. Scope of the Study

6.1 Geographical Scope: Bhopal District

The geographical scope of the present study is limited to the Bhopal district, the capital of Madhya Pradesh. Bhopal represents a significant urban centre in central India and includes a mix of urban, semi-urban, and nearby rural populations. Over the years, the district has developed into an important hub for education, administration, and employment,

offering opportunities in government offices, private corporate organisations, service industries, healthcare, education, retail, and informal sectors. Focusing on the Bhopal district allows the researcher to examine workplace communication challenges within a specific socio-linguistic and cultural context. The findings of the study are expected to be relevant to similar non-metropolitan cities in India, where English functions as a second language in professional environments.

6.2 Population: ESL Youth Aged 18–30 Working in Various Sectors

The population of the study consists of ESL youth between the ages of 18 and 30 who are currently employed in various sectors across the Bhopal district. This age group represents young professionals who are in the early phase of their careers and are actively adjusting to workplace expectations and communication demands. The study includes youth working in diverse sectors such as corporate offices, service industries, government institutions, educational and healthcare organisations, and the informal employment sector. Most of these individuals are non-native English speakers and come from varied educational backgrounds, including Hindi-medium and regional-language institutions. Examining this population helps in understanding how English communication challenges affect youth at a critical stage of their professional development.

6.3 Focus on Verbal, Written, and Interpersonal Workplace Communication

The study focuses on key aspects of workplace communication, namely verbal, written, and interpersonal communication. Verbal communication includes spoken English used in meetings, discussions, presentations, and daily interactions with colleagues and clients. Written communication covers professional tasks such as drafting emails, reports, applications, and official correspondence. Interpersonal communication involves the ability to interact effectively with seniors, peers, subordinates, and customers while maintaining professionalism and clarity. The emphasis of the study is on practical and functional use of English in real workplace situations rather than on academic or literary proficiency. This comprehensive focus allows for a holistic understanding of communication challenges faced by ESL youth.

6.4 Time Frame and Limitations of the Study

The study is conducted within a specific and limited time frame, which restricts the scope of longitudinal analysis of communication development over an extended period. Data collected during the research period reflect the current experiences and perceptions of ESL youth and may not account for changes over time. The study primarily relies on self-reported data obtained through questionnaires and interviews, which may be influenced by personal bias or subjective interpretation. Additionally, due to constraints related to time, resources, and accessibility, the sample size may be limited, affecting the generalizability of the findings. Despite these limitations, the study provides meaningful insights into

workplace communication challenges faced by ESL youth in the Bhopal district and offers a foundation for further research in similar contexts.

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

7.1 Research Design

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine workplace communication challenges faced by ESL youth in the Bhopal district. The descriptive approach is used to systematically describe the nature, frequency, and types of communication difficulties experienced by young professionals in their workplaces. This design helps in capturing real-life experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of ESL youth regarding English communication. The analytical approach is employed to examine relationships between variables such as English proficiency, educational background, confidence level, and job performance. By combining descriptive and analytical methods, the study aims to provide a comprehensive and objective understanding of workplace communication challenges and their impact on professional life.

7.2 Sample Selection

The sample for the study is selected from ESL youth aged 18–30 years working in various sectors within the Bhopal district. A suitable sampling technique, such as random sampling or stratified sampling, is used to ensure representation from different employment sectors and educational backgrounds. The sample includes youth employed in corporate organisations, service industries, government offices, and informal sectors, allowing for a comparative understanding of communication challenges across different workplace environments. The sample size is determined based on the availability of respondents, time constraints, and the scope of the study, while ensuring sufficient data for meaningful analysis. Inclusion of respondents from diverse sectors strengthens the validity and generalizability of the findings within the regional context.

7.3 Tools for Data Collection

Data for the study are collected using both primary and qualitative tools to ensure reliability and depth of analysis. A structured questionnaire is used as the primary tool to collect quantitative data related to communication difficulties, confidence levels, educational background, and workplace communication experiences. The questionnaire consists of closed-ended and Likert-scale items for systematic data analysis. In addition, interviews and focus group discussions are conducted with selected respondents to gain qualitative insights into their lived experiences, challenges, and perceptions regarding English communication in the workplace. Where applicable, observation is also used to understand communication behaviour in natural workplace settings, particularly in service and customer-interaction roles. The combination of these tools enables triangulation of data and enhances the credibility of the study.

7.4 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data are analysed using both quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques. Quantitative data obtained through questionnaires are analysed using percentage analysis to identify trends and patterns in communication challenges. Statistical measures such as mean and standard deviation are used to assess variations in responses related to proficiency, confidence, and communication effectiveness. Where required, inferential statistical tools such as the Chi-square test or t-test are applied to examine relationships between variables like educational background and communication challenges. Qualitative data obtained from interviews and focus group discussions are analysed using thematic analysis, which involves identifying recurring themes and patterns related to workplace communication experiences. This mixed-method approach ensures a comprehensive and balanced interpretation of the research findings.

8. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

8.1 Nature of Workplace Communication Challenges Faced by ESL Youth

The findings of the study reveal that ESL youth in Bhopal district face multiple workplace communication challenges across verbal, written, and interpersonal domains. A significant number of respondents reported difficulty in speaking English fluently during meetings, discussions, and client interactions. Pronunciation problems, hesitation, and frequent grammatical errors were commonly observed, often resulting in a lack of clarity and reduced confidence. Written communication also emerged as a major challenge, particularly in drafting professional emails, reports, and formal documents. Many respondents expressed dependence on templates or assistance from colleagues, indicating limited autonomy in written tasks. These findings are consistent with earlier studies that highlight the gap between academic English learning and practical workplace communication requirements.

8.2 Impact of Limited English Proficiency on Confidence and Job Performance

The study indicates a strong relationship between limited English proficiency and reduced workplace confidence among ESL youth. Respondents with lower self-assessed proficiency levels reported higher levels of communication anxiety and fear of making mistakes, leading to avoidance of speaking opportunities. This reluctance often resulted in limited participation in meetings, reduced interaction with seniors, and minimal involvement in collaborative tasks. From a performance perspective, inadequate communication skills were found to affect task efficiency, clarity of instructions, and overall productivity. In service and customer-facing roles, respondents acknowledged that communication difficulties sometimes led to misunderstandings and lower customer satisfaction. These findings support the view that English proficiency is closely linked to both psychological well-being and professional effectiveness in the workplace.

8.3 Role of Educational Background in Workplace Communication

Analysis of the data suggests that educational background plays a significant role in determining the level of workplace communication challenges faced by ESL youth. Respondents from Hindi-medium or regional-language schools and colleges reported greater difficulty in adapting to English-dominated workplace environments compared to those from English-medium institutions. Limited exposure to spoken English, lack of communicative classroom practices, and minimal opportunities for presentation and discussion during academic years were identified as contributing factors. Although some respondents demonstrated strong technical or subject knowledge, their inability to communicate effectively in English affected their professional visibility and confidence. This finding highlights systemic issues in the education system where communicative competence is not adequately prioritised.

8.4 Employer Expectations and Workplace Reality

The study further reveals a noticeable gap between employer expectations and the actual communication competence of ESL youth. Employers across corporate and service sectors expect employees to possess basic to advanced English communication skills, even at entry-level positions. These expectations include the ability to communicate confidently with clients, prepare written documents, and participate actively in meetings. However, many ESL youth reported that they were not adequately prepared to meet these expectations at the time of joining their organisations. The absence of structured language support or training at the workplace further intensified these challenges, placing the responsibility of improvement largely on the individual employee.

8.5 Influence of Communication Challenges on Career Growth

Findings of the study indicate that workplace communication challenges significantly influence the career growth and professional advancement of ESL youth. Respondents reported that limited English proficiency often restricted opportunities for promotion, leadership roles, and professional development programs. Performance evaluations were perceived to be influenced not only by technical competence but also by communication ability. As a result, some respondents felt marginalised or overlooked despite possessing relevant skills and experience. These findings reinforce the idea that effective workplace communication in English is a key determinant of long-term career success in the Indian employment context.

8.6 DISCUSSION IN RELATION TO PREVIOUS STUDIES

The findings of the present study align with both Indian and global research on ESL challenges in workplace settings. Similar to earlier studies, the results confirm that ESL learners face persistent linguistic and psychological barriers that affect professional communication. The influence of educational background, lack of practical exposure, and communication anxiety observed in this study echoes conclusions drawn by

previous researchers. However, the present study adds regional relevance by highlighting these issues specifically within the Bhopal district, thereby contributing localised insights to the broader field of ESL and workplace communication research.

9. Suggestions and Recommendations

9.1 Introduction

Based on the findings of the study, it is evident that ESL youth in Bhopal face significant challenges in workplace communication, affecting their confidence, job performance, and career growth. To address these issues, a combination of educational, institutional, and workplace interventions is necessary. The following suggestions and recommendations are designed to provide practical and actionable measures for improving communication competence among ESL youth in professional contexts.

9.2 Educational Interventions

Curriculum Reforms: Educational institutions should incorporate practical communication modules into their English curriculum, focusing on spoken English, professional writing, and real-life workplace scenarios. Task-based learning, role plays, presentations, and group discussions can enhance students' communicative competence before they enter the workforce.

English Language Labs: Colleges and training institutes should establish language labs equipped with audio-visual tools, interactive software, and online resources to help students practice listening, speaking, and pronunciation skills in a controlled environment.

Workplace-Oriented Training: Short-term workplace communication courses can be introduced in colleges or vocational training centres. These courses should emphasise client interaction, professional writing, meetings, and report preparation, tailored to sector-specific requirements.

9.3 Workplace-Based Support

Employee Training Programs: Organizations in Bhopal should implement induction and continuous language training programs for new employees, focusing on communication skills relevant to their job roles.

Mentoring and Peer Support: Establishing mentoring systems where experienced employees guide and support ESL youth can boost confidence and improve workplace language use. Peer discussions and feedback sessions can also enhance practical communication skills.

Use of Digital Tools: Encouraging the use of language learning apps, online courses, and communication platforms can help employees practice English in a flexible and self-paced manner. These tools provide real-time feedback and facilitate improvement in vocabulary, grammar, and fluency.

9.4 Psychological and Social Support

Confidence-Building Measures: Workshops on public speaking, presentation skills, and interpersonal communication can reduce anxiety and improve confidence among ESL youth.

Creating a Supportive Environment: Workplaces should foster a culture that encourages communication without fear of judgment, allowing employees to practice English without feeling embarrassed or penalised for mistakes.

Encouraging Peer Interaction: Promoting English-speaking clubs or informal discussion groups within organisations can provide a safe space for employees to develop conversational skills and learn from each other.

9.5 Collaboration Between Institutions and Employers

Industry-Academia Partnerships: Colleges, universities, and employers can collaborate to design training programs that reflect real workplace requirements, ensuring a smooth transition for ESL youth from academic learning to professional environments.

Sector-Specific Communication Training: Employers can offer customised workshops targeting communication needs in particular sectors, such as customer service, corporate reporting, or healthcare, ensuring practical relevance and immediate applicability.

9.6 Summary of Recommendations

The study emphasises a multi-pronged approach to improving workplace communication among ESL youth. Interventions at the educational level, workplace level, and psychological support are all essential to enhance fluency, confidence, and professional competence. Implementation of these measures can help ESL youth overcome linguistic and psychological barriers, meet employer expectations, and achieve long-term career growth. Such initiatives also contribute to a more competent, confident, and productive workforce in Bhopal and similar urban centres.

10. CONCLUSION

The present study examined the workplace communication challenges faced by ESL youth in Bhopal district, focusing on verbal, written, and interpersonal communication in professional settings. The findings reveal that despite acquiring academic English knowledge, young professionals often struggle to apply language skills effectively in real-life workplaces. Challenges such as lack of fluency, pronunciation difficulties, limited vocabulary, grammatical errors, and communication anxiety were found to significantly affect confidence, participation, and job performance. The study also highlighted the role of educational background, showing that youth from Hindi-medium or regional-language institutions face greater difficulties compared to English-medium graduates.

The research underscores the gap between academic English education and workplace communication demands, demonstrating that employers expect functional and professional English skills from employees, even at entry-level positions. ESL youth's limited preparedness often leads to avoidance of speaking opportunities, lower productivity, and restricted career advancement. However, the study also indicates that targeted interventions, including curriculum reforms, workplace training programs, mentoring, and

confidence-building initiatives, can significantly improve communication competence.

Overall, the study concludes that effective workplace communication is not merely a matter of language knowledge but also involves confidence, practice, and exposure to authentic professional interactions. By addressing linguistic, psychological, and educational gaps, ESL youth in Bhopal can enhance their employability, professional effectiveness, and long-term career growth. The findings of this study contribute to both academic scholarship and practical solutions for bridging the gap between ESL learning and workplace expectations in regional contexts.

11. Limitations and Scope for Further Research

11.1 Limitations of the Study

The study is geographically limited to the Bhopal district, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other regions with different socio-linguistic contexts.

The sample size, though representative of corporate, service, and informal sectors, is restricted due to time and resource constraints. A larger sample may provide more comprehensive insights.

Data collection primarily relied on self-reported questionnaires and interviews, which may be influenced by respondents' personal perceptions, biases, and willingness to disclose challenges.

The study focuses on ESL youth aged 18–30 years, limiting its applicability to older professionals or students transitioning into the workforce.

Observational data were limited and not applied extensively across all sectors, which may affect the understanding of actual workplace behaviour.

11.2 Scope for Further Research

Future research can expand to other districts and states in India to compare ESL workplace challenges across diverse regional contexts.

Longitudinal studies can examine how ESL youth improve communication skills over time and how workplace interventions impact career progression.

Sector-specific studies can explore communication challenges in specialised industries such as IT, healthcare, hospitality, and banking, offering tailored solutions for each field.

Experimental studies can assess the effectiveness of language training programs, workshops, and digital learning tools in improving professional English skills.

Research can also investigate psychological and cultural factors, including motivation, self-efficacy, and employer attitudes, that influence workplace communication among ESL youth.

By addressing these areas, future studies can provide deeper insights and practical strategies to enhance workplace communication competence among ESL learners, ultimately contributing to improved employability and professional success.

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