

Vocational Education Students' Experiences Towards the Need for English Communication Skills in Training Places: A Focus Group Interview

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Abstract: *Background: English communication skills are the need in higher education and job market. In India Bachelor of Vocational Educational Programmes (B.Voc.) have English communication skills as one of the core subjects. The focus of these programmes often on communication skills in the first semester. The paper explores the need for English communication skills in the students respective training places.*

Methods:

A focus group interview was conducted with six Vocational students from the discipline Bachelor of vocational Education in Operation Theatre of Pondicherry University Community College, Puducherry. The interview explored their experiences of needs for English communication skills in training places and the feedback received from the doctors and other official regarding their English communication skills. Data was transcribed and analysed thematically until agreement was achieved by two persons including the researcher and a faculty of English from higher education institution.

Results:

There was compulsory need on English communication skills at their respective training hospitals for effective practices including English skills like listening, speaking, reading and writing. Significant influence on understanding the English conversation of doctors and officials there, replying to them, being good at vocabulary and making conversation in English. The students often expected to use English in the hospitals where they take training especially on communication skills related to their profession.

Conclusion:

The curriculum of Bachelor of Vocational Educational Programme in Operation Theatre identified English skills which help for effective communication at their training or training places. The doctors and officials in the respective private and government hospitals used English as basic communication with the students. Sometimes they were dissatisfied with some students' communication skills in English. They used to encourage the students to use communication in hospital premises. Future studies should explore the factor of dissatisfaction towards English communication skills and ways and means should be identified to keep the students alive with English communication skills in training places.

Key words: English Communication skills, Focus group interview, English at Training place, Communicative competence, vocational English.

INTRODUCTION:

Vocational Education and Training and English Communication skills remain the main priorities of Vocational Educational programmes in India at Higher

Education levels. English skills needed to get a job, hold a job, and advance in a career. English for career helps Bachelor of Vocation students acquire fluency and accuracy in English and understand the basic principles functional aspects of English language related to career. The role of English language communication skill is vital for employment opportunities. Currently communication skill plays the significant role at workplace or training places. English communication is the most important which all the vocational students should have to guarantee for functioning their roles efficiently at workplace. Realizing this vocational related soft skill increases graduates' employability, career-oriented courses like B.Voc. programmes in India, gearing efforts toward improving communication skills among the graduates. The present qualitative research study reveals the B.Voc. students need for English communication skills at their respective training places (hospitals) and preference of communication skills and suggestion received by them from the doctors and other officials in hospitals where they get training.

NEED FOR THE STUDY:

There is a demand for English for Career teachers in India at present. Since B.Voc. programmes started since 2014 onwards in India and the teachers who engage in the programmes for vocational English teaching more often received training on general English. Since the selected participants receive their training in hospitals both in private and government, it is necessary to find the needs of communication skills and the feedback received from doctors and other senior staff in hospital at training places to make the teaching learning process authentic in classroom teaching.

PARTICIPANTS AND METHODS:

This study was performed in Pondicherry University Community College by using focus group interview and formulated as four steps of planning, collection of participants, process and analysis.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

This study was designed as qualitative study to analyse interview data using focus group and this study was carried out as four steps including planning, collection, process and analysis. In the planning, scheduled plans for important

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factors in each step were drawn up. In the second step the Participants were contacted in their college. In the third step, process, the Participants were selected purposively according to their experiences in training places.

SELECTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS:

The participants of focus group study were selected six in number (three male and three female) from first year of Bachelor of Vocational Education programme in Operation Theatre Technology from Pondicherry University Community College, Puducherry. All the participants were first generation learners.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION:

All the six participants consented in written to participate and were sent a summary of conclusions.

INTERVIEW PROCESS:

A trial discussion was carried out four days before the actual interview. Before the actual interview, investigator and the participants performed the trial discussion in preparing the participants to know how actual interview might appear. Their experiences towards need for English communication skills at their training places were checked and then actual interview modified and complemented.

The process of focus group interview well planned as process following preparation, introduction, Discussion.

1. Preparation

The investigator arrived one hour before to arrange the seats in circle and to prepare a snack and drink before participants entered the interview room. Then the investigator prepared for recording the whole process.

2. Introduction

Among the participants, investigator acts as moderator for interview, explained the aims of interview and informed the information collected through interview would only be used as data for research study and obtained the consent from the participants then stated the interview by recording through tape.

3. Discussion

Discussion part helped to make clear of the terms used which were related to the study. The topics for discussion introduced and explained in an orderly manner. Discussion with the participant went for about one hour and thirty minutes and the investigator arranged the generated ideas through discussion as topics.

The questions were mainly related to

1. **Need of English communication skills at their respective training places?**
2. **preference of English communication skills which are in need at students respective training places and the suggestions students received from doctors and officials from hospital in regarding to the development of English communication skills.**

Krueger (1988) categories of questioning method and process used in order of opening questions, introductory questions, transition questions, key questions and ending questions.

Topic Guide for Interview:

1. **How do bachelor of vocational students pursue the need of English communication skills at their respective training places?**
2. **What type of preference of English communication skills are in need at students respective training places and What were the suggestions the students received from doctors and officials from hospital in regarding to the development of English communication skills?**

DATA ANALYSIS:

A transcript as the outcome of interview was made and themes identified. It was cross verified by another person who teach English at higher education level.

FINDINGS:

All the participants participated actively during interview session. The interview lasted for one hour and thirty minutes. Questions one to two were given equal weightage. The following findings summarise the responses. Themes which were emerged are listed and then illustrated with verbatim quotations in italics from the interview. paragraph quotations from individual participants are coded to demonstrate the responses.

1. **How do bachelor of vocational students pursue the need of English communication skills at their respective training places?**

Professional English language competence is considered as the important factor in Training places where the students get training. Students struggle to follow doctor's fluency in English and English fluency is one of the important factors in training place.

"The first day of my training in hospital the doctor communicated only in English in explaining the duties which I have to perform, I could not understand since he was so fluent in English communication skills". (Participant one)

The training place needs English communication skills and most of the persons working in hospital speak English. Their basic interaction is in English.

"On the day when I reported to a head nurses in mother tongue, the hospital where I am going to get training, she asked me to meet the doctor who was in-charge there and she further advice to me to use English while interacting with the doctor". (Participant two)

Students are in need to know the common verbs and other related words which are used in training places. It makes the students to move with their work along with the instruction given to them.

"I was somewhat ok with English communication skills but when the doctor asked me to fetch the tool from the table, I did not know the meaning of the word fetch by knowing my situation the doctor further asked me to bring the tool from the table, that time only I understood the meaning and I came to know



the importance of English words related to my profession". (Participant three)

Knowing the spelling of medicines and tools available in operation theatre is essential for the students. It gives confidence to students at their respective training places.

"Since it is a part of training in hospital that knowing the spelling of the medicines is important. Once it happened me that my doctor asked to write down the names of medicines in a paper, that time the nurse who was in charge of medicine went away from my visual observation and I predicted the available medicines names on the table. After seeing my writing, the doctor informed me that I have not correctly written most of the medicines name. I felt very bad". (Participant four)

Knowing the field specific vocabulary is important factor to perform well in understanding what to do and what not to do in and around operation theatre.

"When I visited operation theatre first time there was a list which contained the do's and don'ts related to the place. Everything was printed in English so I could not understand most of them and I asked the senior nurse to give the meaning for difficult and new words". (Participant five)

English communication enhances the higher education students especially at B.Voc. level where the basic communication is in English language and it makes the students to participate actively in the communication process among the senior persons at training place.

"During one of the meeting with the doctors in the hospital, I was unable to answer them in English since their conversation happened only in English language". (Participant six)

2. What type of preference of English communication skills are in need at students respective training places and What were the suggestions the students received from doctors and officials from hospital in regarding to the development of English communication skills?

Speaking skills is one of the influencing factors at the training places. Spoken English is the need in the training places where usually the students receive advice from doctors to develop speaking skill.

"Speaking skill is highly preferred in the place where I go for training, the doctors are so fluent in their English skills I will feel good if I understand and make conversation in the men and they speak English. One day one of the doctors advised me to go for spoken English classes". (Participant one)

The staff members who work as nurse level insist the students to maintain English communication with the doctors and other senior members in hospital.

"what all my training place needs is basic and intermediate level of English communication skills. senior nurses always insist me to make my communication in English with the doctors and other seniors here". (Participant two)

Professional oriented vocabulary and its usage is needed among the students. Doctors and nurses advice to learn field-oriented vocabulary for both written and spoken forms.

"I will feel good if I update myself with English vocabulary which is related to my profession. The doctors and nurses in my training place used to inform me the

meanings of the most of the technical words used by them. After their advice to learn field-oriented words, I started updating my vocabulary by identifying words used in hospital and I try how to use them in my conversation both in written and spoken". (Participant three)

Knowing the spelling of the medicines and equipments is needed from the students. For documentation purpose, doctors and nurses urge the students to maintain error free spelling while writing.

"The nature of duty in the hospital needs written communication skill also. Some times when I do not know the spelling of the medicine, doctors and other nurses ask me to learn the spelling. knowing the spelling of medicines and other related terms is needed from the trainees just like me. As a duty of my work, I have to document the available medicines and equipments in English. For that I need written English skills with error free spelling". (Participant four)

Comprehending the given instructions by doctors and written documents are important at training place.

"as far as my training place is considered, comprehending the written English of doctors and their instructions are important. I am someone ok with basic English but if I learn comprehending the written English used in my place, I will really feel happy. My co-trainees request me to be good at comprehending the written document and the instructions given by doctors". (Participant five)

Conversation skill is given high level preference at training places. Doctors insist the students, who lack English conversation skill, to improve the skill.

"Spoken English is needed from me. Every time I felt difficulty when doctors used to instruct me something in English. Doctors many a times advised me to improve my English conversation skill through that I hope I can make conversation with them". (Participant six)

DISCUSSION:

The outcome of the focused group study reveals the qualitative outputs of the trainees, who pursue first year B.Voc. in Operation Theatre Technology, on the Need of English communication skills at their respective training places and preference of English communication skills which are in need at students respective training places and the suggestions students received from doctors and officials from hospital in regarding to the development of English communication skills. The outcome the study shows that there is a diverse need for English communication skills includes the range of English skills like spoken, written, comprehension, vocabulary, listening etc. The participants of the study strongly mentioned professional oriented

English and its allied skills is the need of the hour. The students further reported that they would feel comfortable if their professional related English skills are enriched.



CONCLUSION:

The research paper provides the ground realities as evidence about the need for English communication skills at training places and the preference and feed back of doctors

and senior members of the training places towards English skills among students of B.Voc. in Operation Theatre Technology. The study suggests to incorporate the findings in B.Voc. curriculum to enhance the needed communication skills at training places among students. It would be valuable to explore the opinions of the doctors and senior member of the respective hospitals about students' English communication skills and their opinions related to them.

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