English for Interior Design: Investigating the Students, Teaching - non Teaching staff and Practitioners' Language Needs

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Abstract

Increasing demand of proficiency in English in every domain of knowledge and profession has become inevitable to be a successful professional or a practitioner in the contemporary times. Considering the new developments in the field of education and arrival of new courses with different specializations in Bachelor of Design (BD) this study aimed to analyze the specific needs of English Communication Skills for the students of Bachelor of Interior Design. This helps to understand and identify specific needs of English Learning with reference to designing English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course for the students of Interior Design (ID). For holistic needs analysis different stakeholders like students, teaching and non teaching staff and practitioners in the field of ID were taken into consideration. The study applied a subjective research based on questionnaires based data collection from 85 students and 41 university staff along with semi structured interviews of 28 different practitioners in the field of ID in context of Gujarat. Thus, data of 154 individuals was collected as a part of this study. It would be useful for researchers to do ESP needs analysis for different specializations of BD in and outside Gujarat.

Keywords: ESP, BD, ID, Communication skills, students, teaching and non teaching staff, practitioners

Introduction

English being the common world language has become popular as the language of all professions all around the world. This gradually increases the demand of using English not only in the nations where it is L1 but also in countries like India where it is still taught after mother tongue and the national language. Still, students are expected to use English considering the medium of instruction in tertiary level education in India. Because of globalization, English has become not only the language of scientific study but also of all other fields of studies in higher education. As a result, most of the universities started offering English Communication Skills as a subject in different graduate level courses. But the demand of learning English differs from field to field which brought in emergence of specific needs based English that is ESP. A lot of research has been done to identify needs of learners with reference to Science, Technology and Business courses. Compared to all of these, different specializations of BD have been offered by different universities of Gujarat during last few years. Considering these new developments there is a demand of research to be done to identify needs of learners so that need based Communication Skills teaching can be offered to these students. This research addresses the same notion and attempts to do English Communication Skills specific needs analysis for Interior Design keeping multiple parameters in focus based on the study of different researchers.

Aims and Objectives

The research aimed at the following objectives:

1. To identify the specific needs of the students of ID for using English Language

- 2. To identify the needs by the stakeholders in terms of current language performance and expectations from these students
- 3. To identify the language needs by the practitioners who participate in daily English communication in the professional world

Problem

More than twenty universities of Gujarat are offering BD in different specializations like graphic design, interior design, product design, visual communication design, fashion design and many more. For this new emerging field of knowledge, after interaction with academicians, it has been found that there is no specific language learning material available in India and in Gujarat which has been published and referred as course book. As material production is a result of needs analysis that becomes a primary requirement to be addressed. It has also been found that at many of these universities General English (GE) is taught instead of ESP and at few of these universities English Communication Skills is taught by Design subject faculties instead of faculties of English Language. Considering expertise and requirement of both a syllabus addressing field specific language needs seems not worked out yet in terms of syllabus design as well as teaching-learning material production. Thus, a need arises to identify field specific language needs for these students. This research initiates the same by narrowing down to identify specific needs of students of ID so that it would help syllabus designers at institute level as well to the authors and publishers to think in the direction of publishing ESP teaching material.

Literature Review

To understand ESP needs analysis and identify different criteria of ESP needs analysis to meet the requirements of English for ID different researchers were studied. Orr (2001) considered that needs analysis plays a key role in ESP syllabus design, selecting or developing teaching material, as well as identifying teaching and evaluation methodology. Harding (2007) regarded that ESP has become a necessity for increasing number of professions considering their needs like field specific vocabulary along with contextual communication and texts. Furthermore, in Basturkmen's (2006, p 18) words, '...the task of the ESP course developer is to identify the needs of the learner and design a course around them.' As per the study of Gashi and Jusufi (2017), effective ESP curriculum is led by an ESP teacher performing different roles like analyzing, evaluating and identifying target learning situations so that achievable objectives and outcomes can be set.

Bocanegra-Valle (2016) considered needs analysis as a vital prerequisite in the process of material development and designing effective EAP course. According to Brindley (1989) and Brown (1995), what differentiates EAP from general language teaching is Learner Needs which is an umbrella term incorporating multiple aspects like background of learners, their current language proficiency, their preferences of language learning, recognizing their communication situations in future, current academic and future professional requirements, considering outside classroom world, their known and unknown language aspects and what they want – all of this information is to be collected and analyzed as a part of needs analysis. The same has been termed technically as present situation analysis and target situation analysis by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) and Hutchison and Waters (1987).

Li So-mui and Mead (2000) conducted needs analysis to prepare an ESP course for the specialization in textile and clothing merchandising in context of Hong Kong where they also included visit to the workplaces of the merchandisers as a part of data collection which means employers and / or field practitioners also contribute in this process. In the similar lines, Johns and Price-Machada (2001) included interviews with supervisors and workers in the target situation as an obligatory step of needs analysis.

Method

The objective of this research was to find out the exact need of teaching – learning English in the field of ID. To meet these requirements, after studying other researchers as a part of literature review, the researchers considered three prominent areas to collect data from. Separate questionnaires including subjective and objective questions were prepared for students pursuing Bachelor of Interior Design (BID) and staff working at BID colleges including English teachers to get the present picture of English language requirement. These questionnaires covered aspects related to required skills and the sub-skills, difficult skills and present level of English. Along with this, semi structured interviews were conducted with professionals working as interior designers in the field to understand field specific English language requirement and it also was helpful to find out employer's requirement against how employees perform in English.

Needs Analysis

Needs analysis for this research was conducted based on the data collected from three different stake holders: students, teachers and practitioners. The details of each are mentioned below

A. Students

To identify learning needs of the students, data was collected of total 85 students studying in 2nd semester ID in 8 different universities through questionnaires. The questionnaire comprises 15 questions focusing on student background in terms of medium of instruction in school, duration of English studied as a subject, emphasis on skills for evaluation, understanding the difference and need of field specific English, difficulty in specific skills of English in general and specific to different functions of language, along with few subjective questions addressing other problems with reference to functioning in English including time students expect to study English.

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Name of the University	No. of students filled the questionnaire
Parul University, Vadodara	48
Veer Narmad South Gujarat University, Surat	1
Uka Tarsadia University, Bardoli	4
Ganpat University, Mahesana	4
R K University, Rajkot	4
Sardar Patel University, Vallabh Vidyanagar	11
Charutar Vidya Mandal University, Vallabh Vidyanagar	7
P P Savani University, Kosamba	6
Total: 8 Universities	85 students

In this, more than half of the students were from Parul University. Around 5% students were respectively from Uka Tarsadia University, Ganpat University and R K University while around 7.5% students were from P P Savani University and Charutar Vidya Mandal University. Data of the least number of students i.e. 1 student was collected from Veer Narmad South Gujarat University whereas the second highest contribution of students, around 10%, was from Sardar Patel University. It also noticeable that organizations other than Parul University were offering an intake of 10 to 20 seats for ID specialization when this survey was conducted.

Surprisingly, all of these students studied English as a subject in their respective schools till 12th grade but only 20% of them had English as a medium of instruction in schooling. Contrary to that 74% students had Gujarati and 6% of students had Hindi as a mode of instruction in school. When it comes to access to the language, 61 students studied it from 1st standard, 2 from 3rd standard and 20 from 5th standard while remaining 2 students didn't answer anything. It is also noticeable that out of four skills of language, during their schooling till 12th grade, majority of the organizations emphasized on evaluating Reading and Writing skills of the students where 80 to 81 students responded. As students had a choice to mark in more than one skill, 6 responses were also marked for the evaluation of Speaking and Listening which is quite low. This indirectly reflects that teaching – learning process was highly focused on Reading and Writing considering the emphasis on evaluation for end result of student performance.

Question 5 addressed whether the language use till 12th and in 1st semester of BID is different or not to which 83 percent students voted positively. While the following question focused on the different between everyday use of English and the English used in ID 84 students responded yes. After these two questions the 7th question focused on giving choice to students for studying English in college and from the available choices 83 students chose to study Field Specific English, 1 opted for General English and 1 left it blank. As a reply to the need of studying English Communication skills in college which addresses specific requirements of the field, an overwhelming majority, 80 students agreed while only around 5% of students replied negatively and 1 student didn't answer. Question 9 focused on asking the language skill that they find difficult. As students were allowed to select more than one answer, the data reflects that highest number of students found speaking as the most difficult skill while listening was voted second highest keeping writing and reading on 3rd and 4th position respectively as reflected in Table 2.

Table 2: Skills students find difficult in general

Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
39	79	7	17

Following question listed functions in each of LSRW skills and asked students to tick mark any two most difficult skills of language considering the functions of language skills mentioned in the questionnaire. Answers to this question is directly proportional to answers of question 4 where majority of the students mentioned that schools conducted evaluation focused on Reading and Writing skills. It can be implied, though indirectly, that 81 students found Speaking as the most difficult skill to perform and 67 students had the same view for Listening because these two skills were not emphasizes for evaluation during primary, secondary and higher secondary education. Contrary to that, 8 students considered Reading and 10 marked Writing as the most difficult skill. Question 11 addressed all the students asking whether they would like to study English Communication Skills in college focusing on the skills that they find the most difficult and to researchers' surprise 100% students responded positively to this. Considering

giving more freedom to students and to collect more perspectives based on their experience and need of language education the next question was subjective and open ended giving students the freedom to mention, other than the listed language functions, what they would like to study to which the responses received are mentioned in Table 3.

Table 3: Topics that students would like to focus more on

Topic	No. of students
Vocabulary	23
Pronunciation and Accent	10
Grammar	23
Tenses	23
Complex sentences, Active Passive	2

Question 13 addressed the difficulties students face while using English in class and college. The responses received from students have been classified into four different categories, directly or indirectly relevant to speaking, as mentioned in the Table 4.

Table 4: Difficulties faced while using English in class and college

Difficulty	No. of students
Feeling inferior	5
Confused while speaking and forget content	14
No / low confidence	49
Hesitation	12

In the next question students were asked about the time they would expect to spend in learning English. Out of total students, 49 students preferred to study 1 to 3 hours per week, 27 students chose 3 to 5 hours while 9 students marked the slot of maximum hours that is 5 to 7 hours per week. In addition to this, students where asked for the preference of semester or year when they wish to study English to which varied responses are received. Maximum number of students, 47 students, opted to study in 1st year, 10 for 2nd year and 13 for 1st and 2nd year while few students preferred to study English in later half of the duration of their degree course; 5 for 2nd last year, 4 for last year and 5 students opted for last 2 years.

B. Teaching and non teaching staff

To understand the needs of teaching – learning from another perspective, data was collected of total 41 teaching and non teaching staff of 10 different universities through questionnaire.

Table 5: Details of staff of different universities who participated

Name of the university	No of teachers
Charutar Vidya Mandal University, Vallabh Vidyanagar	2
Sardar Patel University, Vallabh Vidyanagar	6
Navrachna University, Vadodara	2
The M S University of Baroda, Vadodara	2
Uka Tarsadia University, Bardoli	4
R K University, Rajkot	1
P P Savani University, Kosamba	2
Ganpat University, Mahesana	5
Parul University, Vadodara	14
ITM (SLS) Baroda University, Vadodara	3
Total = 10 Universities	Total = 41

The Questionnaire comprises 11 questions focusing on identifying learner needs from the perspective of teaching and non teaching staff that includes 17 teaching staff of Communication Skills as well as 12 faculties of core subjects of BID, 7 administrators including Principal, Vice Principal and Director and finally, 5 Training and Placement Officers so that expectations of different stake holders can be understood in a better and holistic manner. This group varied in terms of work profile and experience. To begin with work profile, 13 of them were teaching field specific subjects, 17 were faculties of communication skills while 3 faculties had an exposure of teaching both of these subjects and 7 were not involved into teaching. In terms of experience almost 50% of faculties, who

participated in this survey, had more than 10 years of experience while approximately 25% of them were in each category of less than 5 years and more than 5 years of experience.

In an answer to a question of type of English language specific problems that students face when they join BID, following responses were received.

Table 6: English language specific problems that students face

English language specific problems that students face	No. of responses
They complain / don't understand concepts taught in English / never ask to solve their	6
doubts	
Ask or answer questions and also request to explain in Hindi / Gujarati	8
Lack confidence or Don't answer / speak in English	7
Avoid answering when asked	8
Lack vocabulary / do not use appropriate words / answer in one word	7
Ask to speak / teach / explain slowly or to repeat	5

The most common problem that majority of the students face with reference to their English Language Skills is shockingly of Listening while no one mentioned anything with reference to Reading. 27 faculties mentioned difficulties with reference to Listening, 10 in Speaking and 4 in Writing. The detailed responses can be summarized as below

Listening (27 responses)

- Students have issues with listening
- They do not have a habit of listening to English
- They do not understand concept as they do not understand lecture in English
- They understand English in the beginning of the session but not later part of it
- They just go blank in class
- They face problems or do not understand English when the pace of speaking is fast
- They are not able to concentrate for a long time
- They are not habitual to continuous English listening for around 1 hour
- They have poor listening comprehension
- They cannot take notes while listening to the session / talk / lecture Speaking (10)
- They have issues with speaking
- They do not communicate or speak in English
- They avoid speaking English
- They switch to Hindi / Gujarati while speaking Writing (04)
- They have poor writing skills
- They do not write answers in detail
- They do not write descriptive answers
- They do not write correct sentences

5th question focused on the suggestions that these staff members give to students to solve their problems related to English language. And the responses to this question are mentioned below

Table 7: Suggestions given to students by Staff members

Suggestions given	Similar no. of suggestions
To watch more English like TV programs, BBC News, Ted Talks, Movies and	17
You Tube videos	
To contact CS staff	8
Try to speak in English all the time	4
To read books, newspapers, novel, grammar	4
To join English Speaking Course	4
To practice writing or note making	3
To Listen to English Songs	1

To next question, 26 members replied that their colleagues teach in English while 15 responded with the data of bilingual teaching. Furthermore, 13 faculties viewed that their colleagues allow students to participate in other than

English language in classroom activities whereas 28 opined that their colleagues permit participation in only English language. On asking what sort of problems these staff members and their colleagues face while teaching subjects considering the English Language specific problems of the learners, following responses were received. It is evident from the table that almost equal numbers of problems were faced by teaching staff in terms of Listening and Speaking skills.

Table 8: Suggestions given to students by Staff members

responses	Total	
Related to Listening		
8		
6		
4		
3		
	20	
11		
9		
	8 6 4 3	

Similar to the students' questionnaire, here also staff members were asked about the language skill to be focused more while teaching English Communication Skills and quite similar responses were received where majority, 32 members in total, voted for Listening and Speaking which was 17 and 15, respectively, while 4 members chose Reading and 5 voted Writing. Thus, here also major emphasis is on teaching and improving Listening and Speaking Skills of students. Question 10 focused on identifying the skill needed the most to be professionally successful practitioner in the field of ID where again majority of the responses were in favor of Listening and Speaking as mentioned below in Table 9.

Table 9: the most needed skill to be professionally successful practitioner

Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Listening and Speaking
6	17	4	3	11

The next question asked staff members to mention any other aspect of language learning that can also be included in teaching English to BID students. Here the maximum emphasis has been given to Grammar and vocabulary by 13 votes and communicating with others, talking with appropriate body language and facial expressions has been considered by 14 members. Other than this again few members have listed Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing which are respectively, 1, 6, 3, and 4.

C. Practitioners of Interior Design

The third point of view taken as a part of this data collection was from the ID practitioners who work in the field, talk with their clients, discuss with their colleagues and work on different projects. Taking their point of views helped to understand the expectation of employers and professionals from ID students when they start working. So, semi formal interviews consisting of mixed type questions like both subjective and objective were conducted with 28 interior designers, including employees and employers, as a part of needs analysis.

These practitioners were from 18 different organizations out of which 9 were in the field with a company working for less than 5 years, 11 were with a corporate group that was working for more than 5 years while 8 were with the organizations which have been working on different ID projects for more than 10 years. In terms of handing different types of projects around 13 employees were with the firms managing more than 10 projects while almost equal number of designers like 5 and 4 were working with the firm handling more than 5 and more than 20 projects, respectively whereas there were 6 interior designers with the organizations managing more than 30 projects. As per the communication with these professionals it was found out that the higher the organization the higher the staff or the higher the ratio of outsourcing projects to other firms smaller than them. All of these organizations employ recent college pass outs and also allow internship to final year college students. Out of these 20 practitioners confirmed that they use English for office communication while 8 denied it. Responses of these professionals as a reply to the situations when they have to communicate in English are mentioned below

- While communicating with representatives of other ID organizations
- While communicating with other ID organizations
- During conferences and seminars
- Annual meetings of their associations
- Annual meetings of local chapters of state / national associations

- In a Project meetings with designers of other organizations
- Interacting with corporate clients like designing interiors of offices
- Interacting with other designers during any formal gatherings
- Explaining the project while outsourcing the work
- Experience sharing presentation during formal gatherings
- Attending the project presentation received from other agency
- Communicating with interior designers working on national and international projects
- While advertising your work on social media and different platforms

On asking about the English communication of recent college pass outs or interns who join their organization 22 of them responded negatively while 6 of them told that their communication was good. 7th question focused on identifying the English language skills in which these new joining staff or internship students are good at. Though 16 graded Writing and 18 graded Reading as the skills they are good at, they also mentioned that these are skills they are relatively better in than other two skills whereas 6 and 7 voting was also done for Speaking and Listening in sequence. Contrary to this, when they were asked to identify the skills these interns and novice employees are worst in 23 considered Speaking and 14 counted Listening. Though 4 and 8 votes were for Reading and Writing, respectively, majority of these believed that those candidates were generally weak in English but were worst when it came to Speaking.

They were also asked about the skill they think the college students should be taught the most so that they perform better when they complete education and enter professional world. As a reply to this, highest number of counting was found for Speaking, 21, and 2nd highest was for Listening i.e. 18 while 4 and 5 counts were in favor of Reading and Writing, in chronology. However, few practitioners also discussed in details the situations in which the specific skills are practiced. They are mentioned below

- Listening: necessary to understand client / organization / firm's requirements
- Speaking: for continuous communication, presentations, explanations, meetings, negotiations, conviction, etc...
- Reading: to read contract papers and other official documents while dealing with other ID organizations or while doing outsourced projects
- Writing while working on outsourced projects or working for a long term corporate projects where emailing
 and documentation becomes a part of record keeping for all future communications
 Last question asked for their suggestions for what they would expect the ID passing candidates to learn from
 college in terms of English Communication skills. The responses of the interviewees are summarized below
- Most of the graduates are weak in English, somehow they manage reading and writing but Speaking most of them just can't do and even while listening they miss out information and do mistakes
- Strong hold is needed on convincing clients through conversation skills
- Speaking is foremost important when we get projects from other cities through different contacts / agencies
- They always look for situations to switch to Hindi or Gujarati they are not confident in speaking English
- Sometimes, we also have skype meetings or video calls with client organizations where my staff had to ask the matters repeatedly because they missed information while taking notes during meetings
- My organization has on an average 10 to 12 projects in a year and all are through personal references in my city where English communication is not necessary but negotiation and convincing client are important skills
- When we get outsourced projects from bigger organizations meetings are conducted in English but we have to identify a person who can communicate well from our team and pass the information to project coordinators in our team as they are not good in English Communication
- More confidence building in terms of English Communication is to be included in syllabus

Findings

Thus, this needs analysis helped to understand teaching learning needs from three different perspectives students, teaching and non-teaching staff and practitioners. Surprisingly, most of them agreed that Speaking is the primary language skill that needs to be developed in ID students. Following this, the second most preferred skill was none other than Listening. Students and university staff also emphasized on having focus on Vocabulary, Grammar and confidence building while practitioners additionally emphasized on Speaking as the most desired skill to be a successful interior designer.

Scope of Future Research

The findings of this research are quite crucial in terms of designing syllabus of Communication skills for the students undergoing BID in different universities of Gujarat. Further, it also opens gates of research in the area of ESP-EAP material development. This also motivates researchers outside Gujarat to consider this research as a motivation to delve deep in the domain of ID and other specializations of BD course and find out how the needs in other differing backgrounds and geographical contexts would differ to make BID graduate students enter professional world with all required language skills of successful practitioners.

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everyday communication in day to day life is different from the English Communication for the field of interior design (in terms of vocabulary and other aspects of language use) Yes / No

Q.7. Based on your experience of studying subjects in previous semester/s which from the below would be more useful in terms of studying English Language and Communication Skills related subject in Interior Design? General English (advanced level of what you studied in School till 12th grade)

Field Specific English (that relates to Interior Design)

Q.8. Do you agree that there should be English Language and Communication Skills related subject in college that addresses specific requirements of using English, in the field of Interior Design?

Yes / No

Q.9. Which language skills from below do you find difficult in general?

Listening Speaking Reading Writing

- Q.10. Different language functions and skills are mentioned below in 4 different categories. With reference to studying Bachelor of Interior Design program in English, as a medium of instruction, functions and skills from which 2 categories do you find the most difficult to practice?
- Listening
- Understanding of English spoken by native or non-native English speakers
- Listening for comprehension
- Listening for summarization or paraphrasing
- o Note taking along with listening
- o Asking questions for elaboration, clarification, repetition based on listening comprehension
- Speaking
- Asking and answering questions introduction, greetings, small talk, best practices, information, etc...
- o Giving opinion, suggestion, elaboration, description, etc...
- Delivering presentation and / or speech
- o Participating in a group discussion and academic events with peers, teachers and others
- o Agreeing, disagreeing, paraphrasing, persuading, negotiating, presenting different point of view
- Reading
- Skimming and scanning for comprehension and note making
- o Summarizing and paraphrasing information
- o Understanding and analyzing information
- o Understanding and responding as per the need of the situation
- Academic Writing
- o Drafting and replying Letters and emails and other correspondence
- Writing Assignments and articles
- Preparing Proposals
- Preparing Project reports
- Answering during theory exams
- Q.11. Do you agree that syllabus of English and Communication Skills should focus more on the skills that you marked as 'the most difficult' in an answer to previous question?

Yes / No

Q.12. If you want to include anything else in your syllabus of English and Communication Skills that you want to study and not mentioned in the list given above, please mention it here

Q.13. What type of difficulty or problems do you have / face while using English in class / college? (for example feeling shy / inferior, not confident, etc...)

Q.14. According to you how many hours per week do you think field specific English should be taught?

1 - 3 hrs 3 - 5 hrs 5 - 7 hrs

Q.15. According to you, how long field specific English should be taught?

1st year / 2nd year / 1st an 2nd year / 2nd last year / last year / last 2 years

Appendix 2

Questionnaire for teaching and non teaching staff
Name of College Name of University
Designation

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1. Which subjects do you teach?

Related to Interior Design Communication Skills Both None

2. Experience in the field

Less than 5 years more than 5 years more than 10 years

- 3. What type of English Language specific problems do students face when they join Bachelor of Interior Design?
- 4. What's the most common problem that majority of the students face with reference to their English Language Skills?
- 5. What suggestions do you give them to solve these problems?
- 6. Do your colleagues / teaching faculties teach in English only or they prefer to be bilingual in the class?
- 7. Do your colleagues / teaching faculties allow students to participate in classroom activities in a language other than English?
- 8. What problems do you / your colleagues face while teaching subjects considering the English Language specific problems of the students?
- 9. According to you which from the following skills should be focused more while teaching English and Communication Skills specific subject to these students?

Listening Speaking Reading Writing

10. According to you which of the following English language skills are needed the most to be professionally successful practitioner in the field of interior design?

Listening Speaking Reading Writing

11. Which other aspects should be taken care of, according to you, with reference to teaching English to the students of Interior Design?

Appendix 3

Interview Questions for Practitioners / Interior Designers

Interview Questions

1. For how many years your organization or organization that you are working with is doing interior design projects?

Less than 5 years more than 5 years more than 10 years

2. Does the organization employ recent college pass outs or allow internship to college students pursuing their studies?

Yes / No

3. On an average, how many projects does the organization work on around the year?

More than 5 More than 10 more than 20 more than 30

4. Do you have daily English Communication in Office?

Yes / No

- 5. When do you have to communicate in English? (in and outside office situations)
- 6. Are these recent college pass outs or interns good at English communication?

Yes / No

7. What are these recent college pass outs or interns good at in terms of English Language Skills?

Listening Speaking Reading Writing

8. What are these recent college pass outs or interns bad at in terms of English Language Skills? Listening Speaking Reading Writing

9. What is required the most in terms of English Communication?

Listening Speaking Reading Writing

10. Any suggestions that you would like to give with reference to college curriculum for improving English Communication Skills of the students?