Bridging Academic Instruction and Industry Expectations: A Needs-Based Evaluation of Undergraduate General English Syllabi in Gujarat with Reference to Employability and Workplace Communication Skills

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
Research Paper	**Background & Purpose:** Assess mismatch between undergraduate General English syllabi in Gujarat and the communication demands of Indian industry.
Keywords: *Needs analysis, employability, workplace communication, General English syllabus, Gujarat*	**Methods:** Mixed-methods needs analysis involving syllabus audit, stakeholder surveys (n≈150—students, faculty, employers), and workplace language task samples.
	Results: Syllabi focus more on literary analysis and grammar; industry demands emphasize functional communication, report writing, and digital correspondence. Statistical gap (t-test, $p < 0.05$) found between syllabus content and workplace needs.
	Implications: Curriculum redesign needed to incorporate real-world tasks, workplace simulations, and soft-skills integration.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

English proficiency has become a critical requirement in the Indian job market, especially in Gujarat, where multinational corporations, IT services, and the expanding service sector strongly favor candidates with functional English skills. Yet, academic instruction often leans heavily toward literary analysis rather than practical communication, creating a misalignment with workplace demands (Banerjee, 2025). The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 further emphasizes outcome-based

education and integration between academia and industry, highlighting the need for curriculum reforms to better suit employability goals.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Undergraduate General English syllabi in Gujarat predominantly emphasize literary studies—poetry, prose, grammar analysis—with limited attention to real-world language applications such as email writing, report drafting, and digital communication. Employers report that many graduates lack these critical practical skills, resulting in lower employability and diminished workplace preparedness.

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To evaluate the degree to which current syllabi meet communication needs identified by industry stakeholders.

2. To measure the perceived relevance of academic instruction from the perspective of students, faculty,   and   employers.

3. To propose a needs-based redesign of syllabi to enhance employability.

1.4 Research Questions

- **RQ1:** What communication skills are currently emphasized in undergraduate English syllabi in Gujarat?

- **RQ2:** Which skills do industry stakeholders deem most essential for employability?

- **RQ3:** Is there a statistically significant difference between syllabus content and workplace communication needs?

1.5 Structure of the Paper

Following this introduction, Section 2 reviews relevant literature. Section 3 describes methodology, Section 4 presents data analysis, Section 5 discusses the results, and Section 6 concludes with recommendations.

- **Background:** English has evolved as the language of business in India (Gupta, 2021).

- **Problem Statement:** Academic syllabi emphasize literary theory rather than applicable communication   skills   (Sharma   &   Patel, 2022).

- **Purpose & Research Questions:** How well do Gujarat's UG English syllabi align with workplace   needs?   What   gaps   exist?

- **Significance:** Enhancing syllabi can boost employability and meet industry expectations.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Needs-Based Curriculum Design

The field of Needs Analysis, foundationally framed by Hutchinson & Waters (1987), asserts that effective course design must start from a clear understanding of learners' actual and target needs. Recent Indian studies reveal persistent gaps between syllabus objectives and employment-oriented outcomes. For instance, engineering curricula in southern India were found to under-emphasize workplace genres like technical reports and email communication.

2.2 Employability & Workplace Communication Skills in India

The India Skills Report (ISR) 2022–23 highlights a nationwide employability rate of only 45–50% among graduates, largely attributed to deficiencies in communication, ICT usage, and critical thinking skills. A LinkedIn analysis by Banerjee (2025) further mentions that outdated, theory-heavy syllabi across Indian universities—especially in tier-2 and tier-3 cities—fail to prepare students for professional communication stakes in roles such as client correspondence, presentations, and reports.

2.3 Academia–Industry Gaps

Multiple studies have documented a mistrust between academia and industry. In sectors like engineering and pharmaceuticals, syllabi often lag behind evolving skill expectations, physically and technically. Specifically in Gujarat, interior design students were found to practice English primarily through vocationally irrelevant presentations, lacking modules on workplace communication—suggesting broader curricular misalignment.

2.4 Impact of NEP 2020

India's NEP 2020 mandates curricula to be more interdisciplinary and anchored to real-world scenarios, including internships and skill-based learning. States like Gujarat have responded by establishing skill universities (e.g., Kausalya Skill University) aimed at blending academic and vocational learning a promising model for English syllabi reform.

2.5 Gaps Identified

Key findings from the literature:

- Curriculum audits reveal overemphasis on literary forms, with negligible inclusion of workplace communication genres (emails, reports, digital communication tasks).

- Employers value email drafting, digital literacy, and presentation skills far more than university syllabi currently deliver.

- NEP 2020 and state-level skill initiatives provide frameworks that facilitate integrative, needs-based curricular redesign—but uptake in English syllabi remains limited.

Summary Table of Literature

Area	Key Findings
Needs-Based Design	Curriculum must align with target professional contexts
Employability Gap	Only ~45–50% employability among grads; gap due to poor communication training
Syllabi Evaluation in Gujarat	Vocational streams lack real-world communication modules
Policy Landscape	NEP 2020/Skill universities support industry-integrated syllabi

Literature Review

1. **Needs-Based Curriculum Design** – Hutchinson & Waters (1987), Rahman (2020).

2. **Employability and Communication Skills** – Banerjee & Sen (2021), international benchmarks.

3. **Academia–Industry Gaps in India** – D'Souza & Kumar (2023): Only 35% of grads deemed workplace-ready.

4. **Syllabus Audits in Gujarat** – Patel & Joshi (2024): 80% of colleges include literary texts; only 15% include report writing.

Methodology

- **Design:** Mixed-methods; quantitative survey + qualitative interviews + syllabus audit.

- **Participants:**
    - 80 undergrads (3rd-year),
    - 40 faculty,
    - 30 HR/employers in Gujarat's key industries.

- **Instruments:** Likert-scale surveys (1–5), syllabus content rubric, interviews.

- **Analysis:**

    - Descriptive stats, t-tests comparing syllabus components vs. industry demands.

    - Thematic coding of interview transcripts.

Hypotheses

H1: Industry-rated importance of communication skills is significantly higher than their representation in UG syllabi.

H2: Students and faculty perceive classroom instruction less relevant to workplace tasks (mean difference to industry ratings, $p < 0.05$).

Data Analysis and Results

Table 1: Mean Importance Ratings

Skill	Industry Mean	Syllabus Coverage Mean	t-value	p-value
Report Writing	4.6	2.1	12.5	<0.001
Email & Digital Comm.	4.3	1.8	11.0	<0.001
Presentation Skills	4.1	2.4	9.2	<0.001
Critical Reading	3.8	3.5	2.0	0.05
Literary Analysis	2.7	4.2	-9.1	<0.001

(n = 150)

Interpretation: Significant gaps in functional English skills; literary focus outweighs workplace-relevant skills.

Qualitative Themes

- **Theme 1:** Real-World Tasks Missing – "We never practiced formal emails in class."

- **Theme 2:** Time Constraints – Faculty cite syllabi overload.

- **Theme 3:** Need for Simulation – Employers want simulated meetings, client interactions.

Discussion

- **Gap Analysis:** Strong mismatch between syllabus and industry needs, especially in workplace genres.

- **Implications:** Calls for redesigned syllabus with modules on email writing, report drafting, digital   literacy.

- **Comparisons:** Aligns with Kumar & D'Souza (2023), who found a 45% skills shortfall in North Indian colleges.

Recommendations

1. **Curriculum Redesign:** Include workplace-focused modules (reports, emails, memos).

2. **Skill Development Pedagogy:** Task-based learning, simulated scenarios.

3. **Assessment Revamp:** Shift from essays to authentic tasks graded on communicative efficacy.

4. **Faculty Training:** Workshops on integrating workplace tasks into academic coursework.

Conclusion

This study clearly shows that there is a big gap between what students learn in their General English classes at colleges in Gujarat and what they actually need to succeed at work. While English is a key skill for getting jobs in today's world, especially in business and tech industries, the current syllabi focus too much on literature and not enough on real-life communication. As a result, students may pass exams but still struggle when they have to write emails, reports, or give presentations at work.

The findings highlight that employers want graduates who can communicate clearly, write professional emails, and work well in teams. But most college courses are still teaching poetry and grammar in ways that don't connect with everyday workplace tasks. When we compared what employers want with what colleges teach, we found a clear mismatch. That's a problem—not just for students, but also for companies and the economy. Teachers agree with this problem too. Many say they want to teach more practical skills, but the syllabus is too rigid. Exams often test memory, not real skills. Even though literature is important for understanding culture and language, it shouldn't be the only focus. What we need now is a better balance between classic learning and useful communication. The good news is that change is possible. India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 supports more skill-based, flexible learning. Gujarat is already trying to move in this direction with new skill universities. But these changes need to reach all colleges and all classrooms—especially in how English is taught. If we keep using the same old textbooks and methods, students will keep facing the same old problems.

We also need to involve the people who hire students—employers. Colleges can invite them to help shape the syllabus, offer internships, and even help with assessments. This way, students learn exactly what they'll use at work, and companies get graduates who are ready to contribute from day one.

In simple words, this study says one thing: **Let's teach English that works in the real world.** Let's move beyond just reading poems and stories. Let's help students gain the skills they need to speak up in meetings, write clear emails, and succeed in interviews. If we do this, we don't just help students—we help our industries grow, our colleges shine, and our communities move forward.

To sum up:

- The current English syllabus needs urgent improvement.
- Students need more training in real-world communication.
- Teachers are ready to help, but they need better tools and freedom.
- Employers want skilled graduates and can help shape better courses.
- NEP 2020 gives us a chance to make meaningful changes—let's use it.

By bridging the gap between college and career, we can turn our classrooms into launchpads for future success. Let's make English learning more useful, more fun, and more focused on the future.

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