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An Investigation into "Barriers to Effective Communication: Employability Skills

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ABSTRACT

Effective communication in English remains a cornerstone of employability yet numerous barriers continue to limit the professional success of graduates particularly those from non-native English backgrounds. This investigation examined the primary obstacles to proficient workplace communication among 250 final-year undergraduate students and recent graduates from diverse disciplines at two urban universities. A mixed-methods design combined quantitative surveys using a validated 40-item Barriers to Communication Scale with qualitative focus-group interviews involving 45 participants and 15 employer representatives. Data collection occurred over six months allowing for triangulation of learner self-reports employer perceptions and observed communication performance in simulated job interviews.

Results identified linguistic barriers as the most prominent category with 68 percent of respondents citing inadequate vocabulary range pronunciation inaccuracies and grammatical inconsistencies as major impediments to clear expression during interviews and team meetings. Cultural barriers ranked second including mismatches in non-verbal cues directness norms and pragmatic conventions that led to misunderstandings in cross-cultural professional interactions. Psychological factors such as communication apprehension and low self-efficacy affected 55 percent of participants resulting in reduced participation and missed networking opportunities. Additional structural barriers encompassed limited exposure to authentic English discourse and insufficient integration of employability-focused tasks within existing English curricula. Statistical analyses via multiple regression revealed that these barriers collectively accounted for 42 percent of variance in self-reported employability confidence while employer feedback confirmed that communication deficiencies contributed to rejection rates of up to 35 percent in entry-level positions.

Qualitative themes further illuminated how socioeconomic background and prior educational emphasis on rote learning exacerbated these issues underscoring the need for targeted interventions. The study highlights that without systematic addressing of these barriers English language proficiency alone fails to translate into workplace readiness. Implications for educators include redesigning English for Specific Purposes courses to incorporate barrier-specific modules such as role-play simulations intercultural pragmatics training and anxiety-reduction workshops. Curriculum



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developers and career services can benefit from embedding employability skills audits early in programs to foster proactive skill development. Limitations of the research involve the sample's urban focus and reliance on self-report measures suggesting caution in generalizing to rural or international contexts. Future directions propose longitudinal tracking of barrier mitigation strategies and comparative studies across different English proficiency levels. Overall, this investigation underscores the urgent necessity of bridging communication gaps to enhance graduate employability empowering learners to navigate professional environments with confidence and competence.

Keywords: *Communication Barriers, Employability Skills, ESL Learners, Mixed-Methods Study.*