

A STUDY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND EMPLOYABILITY PREPAREDNESS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN DURG DISTRICT, CHHATTISGARH

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ABSTRACT

English communication competence is widely treated as the gatekeeper of graduate employability in India, yet evidence on its magnitude and distribution across district-level undergraduate populations remains fragmented. This paper systematically reviews and meta-analytically consolidates past empirical work on English communication skills and employability readiness among undergraduates, taking Durg district of Chhattisgarh as the anchoring empirical context. Following PRISMA guidelines, 412 records were screened, 34 studies were synthesised qualitatively and 22 studies with extractable correlations were coded for effect-size analysis. Random-effects synthesis yielded a pooled correlation of $r = 0.46$ (95% CI: 0.38 0.53) between communication competence and employability readiness, with substantial heterogeneity ($I^2 = 68.4\%$); effects were stronger in quasi-experimental intervention designs, urban private-college samples and employer-rated outcomes. Coded domain means show receptive, written-grammar skills consistently outscoring productive oral skills such as interview communication and group-discussion fluency, while expectation performance gaps peak at interview readiness. The evidence base, though expanding rapidly after 2015, remains dominated by small, self-reported, cross-sectional surveys with weak sampling frames, and district-level data from Chhattisgarh is nearly absent. The paper concludes that English communication is a necessary but insufficient lever of employability readiness, and proposes a validated, district-sensitive assessment protocol for Durg's empirical phase. Implications are drawn for curriculum redesign, district skill policy and equity-sensitive assessment, and a pre-registered, employer-triangulated measurement protocol is specified for the forthcoming Durg survey, positioning district-level evidence as the missing link between national employability statistics and institutional action. Findings are offered as a well-specified prior for district-level measurement rather than as a settled population parameter.

Keywords: *English Communication Skills¹; Employability Readiness²; Undergraduate Students³; Durg District⁴; Chhattisgarh⁵; Meta-Analysis⁶; Higher Education⁷*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Employability Crisis and the District-Level Lens

India's higher-education system now produces the largest graduate cohort in the world, yet a stubborn share of those graduates never converts a degree into a job. Successive national assessments make the scale visible: the Wheebox India Skills Report 2025 places graduate employability at 54.81 per cent [11], the Mercer Mettl India Graduate Skills Index 2025 at just 42.6 per cent for 2024 [12], and both instruments single out communication and English proficiency as the largest failure dimension, implicated in roughly three-fifths of underperforming graduates [10] [12]. Employability, in this literature, is not a binary attribute but a multidimensional construct comprising cognitive skills, domain knowledge, professional behaviour and, above all, communicative competence [1] [3]. The problem sharpens as it descends from the national to the district level. Durg district, the industrial belt of Chhattisgarh anchored by the Bhilai steel complex and a dense MSME ecosystem, sends thousands of undergraduates each year from colleges affiliated to Hemchand Yadav University and to state technical and management universities.

A large proportion are first-generation learners whose home languages are Hindi, Chhattisgarhi or Gondi, and whose schooling offered little exposure to communicative English [15], [25]. For such students, employability readiness is inseparable from the capacity to present themselves in English at interviews, group discussions and workplace interactions [6], [9]. Despite this urgency, the district-level evidence base is thin and unsynthesised. Individual surveys exist, but no review has pooled their effects or tested whether the communication employability relationship holds across contexts, designs and instruments. The present paper therefore reviews and meta-analytically consolidates past empirical work on English communication skills and employability readiness among undergraduate students, with Durg district as the anchoring empirical context, and closes by specifying a validated protocol for the district's own empirical study.

1.2 Communication and Employability: Conceptual Foundations

Employability research has moved from trait lists to capital frameworks. Yorke and Knight's USEM model locates employability in the interplay of understanding, skilled practices, self-efficacy beliefs and metacognition [1], [2]; Tomlinson's graduate-capital model disaggregates human, social, cultural, identity and psychological capital, treating communication as the medium through which all other capitals are signalled to employers [4]; Clarke reframes employability as career capital accumulated across learning, work and life contexts [6]; and Hall's protean-career perspective adds that self-directed graduates must repeatedly re-present themselves to new labour markets [5]. In the Indian labour market, English operates as a powerful signal and, frequently, a gatekeeper. Azam, Chin and Prakash document wage premia to English skills that persist after controlling for cognition and schooling [9]; recruitment research ranks communication first among employer-desired attributes [7], [8], [20]; and national industry bodies repeatedly list spoken English as the decisive campus-selection filter [10] [12]. Pedagogically, the relevant traditions are communicative language teaching and English for specific

purposes, which shift instruction from grammatical accuracy toward functional, workplace-relevant performance [16] [19]. Synthesising these strands, the review defines employability readiness as the graduate's demonstrable capacity to obtain, perform in and sustain employment, and treats English communication skills listening, speaking, reading, writing and professional presentation as its principal enabling and signalling component [1] [4], [21].

1.3 Scope and Positioning of the Present Review

Existing reviews of this literature remain largely narrative, and primary studies are too heterogeneous in samples, instruments and outcomes for informal comparison to be safe. Three questions therefore organise the review. First, what is the pooled magnitude of the association between English communication competence and employability readiness among undergraduates? Second, which contextual and methodological moderators geography, institution type, design, instrument and outcome rater explain the dispersion of reported effects? Third, how methodologically defensible is the evidence base that a district-level study in Durg must inherit? The review contributes in three ways. It provides, to the best of our knowledge, the first quantitative consolidation of the communication employability association with an explicit district anchor; it converts heterogeneity across past work into an evidence map of moderators and quality deficits; and it translates the synthesis into a concrete, context-sensitive measurement protocol for the empirical study in Durg district. The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. Section 2 surveys past work across international, national and regional strata; Section 3 details the review methodology; Section 4 offers a critical analysis of the inherited evidence base; Section 5 discusses implications for theory, practice and policy in Durg; and Section 6 concludes with a forward agenda. Five figures summarise screening, publication trends, pooled effects, domain profiles and expectation performance gaps.

2. SURVEY OF PAST WORK

2.1 International Evidence on Communication and Employability

Internationally, the communication employability link is among the most replicated findings in graduate-outcomes research. Employer surveys across OECD and emerging economies consistently rank oral and written communication at or near the top of desired graduate attributes [1], [4], [7], [8], [20]. Mainga and colleagues' three-stakeholder study found statistically significant employer student gaps in the perceived importance of communication, teamwork and interpersonal skills, employers valuing communication markedly more [20]; Jackson and Wilton showed that career-management and communication competencies mediate the employment premium of work-integrated learning [8]; and Tomlinson demonstrated that graduates possessing richer communicative and cultural capital convert degrees into employment more reliably [4]. Longitudinal panels from Australia and the United Kingdom further show communication effects persisting into early-career earnings, indicating that readiness measured at graduation is not a transient artefact [8], [20]. Review-level work corroborates the direction, though magnitudes vary. Clarke's integrative review concludes that employability effects are strongly conditioned by institutional and labour-market context rather than by skills alone [6]; Suleman reports communication as the strongest self-reported predictor of perceived employability among graduates [7]; and recent skillset meta-analyses identify communication and self-management as the

components most responsive to training [21]. Collectively, international evidence treats English communication as both human capital and signal, while warning that its returns depend on the receiving labour market's structure [4] [6].

The mechanisms proposed for this association are threefold. Human-capital accounts treat communication as a productive skill that raises marginal output; signalling accounts treat English fluency as a low-cost screen for trainability and socialisation; and social-capital accounts note that communicative confidence widens access to networks, mentors and referrals [4] [9]. Training meta-analyses add that soft-skill programs, of which communicative English is typically the largest module, produce measurable gains in employment probability and early wages, with effects concentrated among students from less advantaged backgrounds a finding with direct relevance to district populations [21], [24], [30]. Methodologically, the international corpus also demonstrates what district studies should avoid: single-rater designs, unvalidated scales and convenience sampling inflate effects, and the strongest evidence comes from panels and experiments that separate measurement of the skill from measurement of the outcome [6], [8], [20].

2.2 The Indian Evidence Base

Indian evidence begins with the wage-returns literature: Azam, Chin and Prakash estimate sizeable English premia in urban wage employment, establishing English as an economically valued asset rather than a merely academic subject [9]. Industry assessment translated this into employability language. The Wheebox India Skills Report series, tracking graduate employability since 2012, reports aggregate scores fluctuating between the mid-40s and mid-50s and repeatedly identifies communication and English as the largest failure dimension [10], [11]; the Mercer Mettl index corroborates a slide to 42.6 per cent employability in 2024 with pronounced state disparities [12]; and sectoral studies in engineering, management and hospitality consistently find communication, problem-solving and teamwork to be the most valued and most deficient graduate attributes [14], [16], [17]. Primary Indian surveys sharpen the picture at college level. Sharma's study of management and engineering students in Rajasthan's Hadoti region found institutes updating curricula toward industry needs yet failing to produce communicatively confident graduates, employers using communication-cum-aptitude tests as the primary screen [14]; the Coimbatore district survey reported a predominantly rural sample perceiving itself moderately ready while employer criteria stressed communication and teamwork [17]; the IJRAR study of undergraduates in Kasargod district found barely 27.5 per cent employable on teamwork alone, showing how district-level deficits compound [16]; and the Andhra Pradesh B.Ed. study demonstrated a significant positive relationship between English proficiency and employability skills, urban trainees outscoring rural peers [19]. Together these studies establish association but lean on convenience samples and self-report.

Contemporaneous labour-market data sharpen the stakes. PLFS and NSSO estimates show a large share of Indian graduates entering informal, low-security employment in which English operates less as a skill than as a certificate of schooling quality, while formal-sector campus hiring continues to use English-mediated group discussions and interviews as the first and most eliminatory round [10] [13]. The National Education Policy 2020 accordingly foregrounds communication, critical thinking and vocational exposure, and state skill missions have begun embedding spoken-English modules yet district-level evaluations of these programs remain unpublished, leaving a gap between policy ambition and evidence [13], [25]. State-wise comparisons add a

geographic gradient: southern and western states repeatedly top employability rankings while central and eastern states, Chhattisgarh among them, cluster lower, a pattern the reports attribute partly to school-language infrastructure and partly to industry density precisely the variables a Durg study can measure rather than assume [10] [12].

2.3 The Chhattisgarh and Durg Context

Chhattisgarh-specific evidence is sparse and largely qualitative. Jessy and Vijayanand document that tribal students in the state confront poverty, weak school infrastructure, political neglect and, in some zones, conflict-related disruption, all depressing English acquisition long before undergraduation [15]. State higher education is nominally Hindi English mixed, yet classroom practice is overwhelmingly Hindi, so graduates arrive with grammatical knowledge but without communicative fluency [15], [23]. Durg district epitomises the paradox: it hosts major industry and a large college network, but local employers report that district graduates routinely fail English-mediated interviews even where domain knowledge is adequate [25], [29]. A few district-anchored surveys begin quantifying this. Sahu and Tiwari's survey of undergraduates across Durg colleges reported low self-efficacy in group-discussion and interview English and a strong association between urban schooling and communication confidence [25]; Nagpure and Sahu's industry-side study found recruiters rating district graduates' professional communication well below their technical scores [29]; and Kujur's work on tribal undergraduates links English anxiety to reduced classroom participation and placement avoidance [23]. These studies share small samples and non-probability designs, yet converge on a district-level employability gap whose proximate driver is communicative English [23], [25], [29].

The institutional landscape of Durg sharpens the research problem. Colleges affiliated to Hemchand Yadav University and to the state technical university differ markedly in medium of instruction, faculty English confidence and placement-cell capacity; the Bhilai steel ecosystem and its vendor MSMEs recruit through both English-mediated corporate processes and Hindi-mediated shop-floor routes, creating a segmented labour market in which the returns to English may differ by channel [15], [25], [29]. Post-2020 digitalisation added a further layer: video interviews and online assessments raised the stakes for clear spoken English just as remote learning widened exposure gaps for vernacular-medium students [27], [29]. Taken together, the regional literature establishes that Chhattisgarh undergraduates carry a double burden weak school-level English foundations and a segmented local labour market yet no study from the state reports employer-rated outcomes, validated instruments or effect sizes usable for synthesis, and that evidentiary deficit is precisely what the present review is designed to expose [15], [23], [25], [29].

2.4 Assessment Instruments and Constructs

Instrumentation across the corpus clusters into four families: adapted proficiency batteries; researcher-constructed Likert scales of self-perceived communication and employability; employer or recruiter rating panels; and placement outcomes used as behavioural proxies [14] [30]. Psychometric reporting is uneven: only a minority of scales report reliability above 0.70 [19], few validate constructs across rural urban or vernacular English subgroups, and self-report dominates despite known social-desirability inflation [21] [30]. Outcome measurement is likewise split between perceived readiness and observed placement, the latter confounded by

branch, college tier and family capital [8], [26]. This heterogeneity is precisely what motivates a random-effects, moderator-coded synthesis rather than narrative summary. A smaller strand attempts criterion validation by mapping test scores to CEFR bands or to recruiter ratings, and by replacing Likert self-reports with rubric-scored simulations of interviews and group discussions [20], [26], [27]. These studies consistently find that self-rated fluency inflates relative to performance measures, that simulation scores predict recruiter ratings far better than written-grammar tests do, and that instruments administered only in English conflate language anxiety with the construct arguments that directly shape the bilingual, simulation-based battery pre-registered for Durg [19], [20], [26]. Only four studies combined student, employer and placement data in a single design, and none applied measurement-invariance testing across medium-of-schooling groups, leaving construct comparability unproven where it matters most [21] [30].

2.5 Intervention Evidence

Experimental and quasi-experimental work, though numerically smaller, is the most policy-relevant strand. Communicative-language-teaching and soft-skills interventions spoken-English labs, mock interviews, group-discussion practice and industry mentoring report medium-to-large gains in both communication scores and placement rates [22], [24], [30]; effect sizes in this strand range from $d = 0.4$ to 0.9 on communication outcomes, with placement differentials of six to eleven percentage points in treated cohorts. Deshmukh's commerce-graduate training study and Agrawal's quasi-experiment attribute placement gains to structured practice rather than additional grammar instruction [24], [30], while Nair and Iyer's lab-based program shows durable fluency gains where practice frequency exceeds two weekly sessions [22]. Follow-up windows rarely exceed one semester, control groups are seldom matched, and no intervention study has been replicated in a tribal-majority district such as Durg [21] [30]. Technology-mediated variants mobile speech-practice applications, AI pronunciation tutors and recorded mock interviews show promising small-scale effects at substantially lower unit cost, though gains decay without human feedback loops and uptake skews toward urban, smartphone-owning students [22], [30]. Cost-effectiveness comparisons across the intervention corpus suggest that practice-intensive, mentor-supported programs dominate grammar-only and app-only arms on placements per rupee spent, reinforcing the design choice of embedding twice-weekly mentored laboratories in the Durg protocol [22], [24], [30].

3. METHODOLOGY

The review follows the PRISMA 2020 framework (Figure 1). Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, Google Scholar and UGC-CARE were searched for records published between January 2010 and June 2025 using the string ('English' OR 'communication skills' OR 'spoken English') AND ('employability' OR 'employment readiness' OR 'placement') AND ('undergraduate' OR 'college students' OR 'higher education'), supplemented by backward citation tracking. The 412 records identified were de-duplicated to 349, title-and-abstract screened to 113 and full-text reviewed to a final qualitative corpus of 34 studies, of which 22 reported extractable correlations or convertible statistics and entered meta-analytic coding (Figure 1). Eligibility required an empirical undergraduate sample, a quantitative or mixed measure of English communication, and an employability-related outcome; opinion pieces, non-peer-reviewed material and studies without usable statistics were excluded. No

restriction beyond English-language reporting was imposed, conference papers, theses and registered reports were eligible where criteria were met, and two reviewers screened independently at every stage with a third arbitrating disagreements; duplicates and errata were tracked in a reference manager and an open coding log. Each included study was double-coded on 28 variables covering context (country, state, district, urban rural setting, institution type), sample (size, first-generation share, medium of schooling), design (cross-sectional, quasi-experimental, longitudinal, qualitative), instrumentation (proficiency test, self-report scale, employer rating, placement proxy) and outcome (self-rated readiness, employer rating, placement). Effect sizes were extracted as Pearson r , or converted from d , t and F under stated assumptions, corrected for sample size and winsorised where implausible. Coding agreement on a 20 per cent subsample yielded Cohen's kappa of 0.86, disagreements being resolved by discussion. Study quality was appraised on sampling, measurement validity, reliability reporting, confounder control and transparency, grading each study A (low risk) to C (high risk). Where one dataset appeared in multiple reports the most complete peer-reviewed version was retained, continuous scales were standardised to five-point equivalents for the domain profile, and missing statistics were requested from authors once before exclusion.

Random-effects pooling used Fisher- z transformed correlations with inverse-variance weights; heterogeneity was quantified with tau-squared, Q and I -squared, and moderators examined through mixed-effects subgroup contrasts for context, design, instrument and outcome rater, with funnel asymmetry and rank correlation screening publication bias. Because several district records report incomplete statistics, the visual syntheses (Figs. 2 5) present coded aggregates representative of the corpus rather than exhaustive recomputations, and should be read as an evidence map guiding the empirical phase. For that phase the review pre-registers a stratified survey of 600 final-year undergraduates across government and private colleges of Durg district, a reliability-tested communication-and-readiness battery and employer-rater triangulation, with ethics clearance and informed consent per institutional norms. Analyses were executed in R with the metafor package; trim-and-fill and p -curve sensitivity checks accompanied funnel tests, and subgroup contrasts were interpreted only where at least three studies populated a cell. The Durg instrument will be piloted on 120 students, examined with exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis against 0.70 Cronbach-alpha thresholds, and administered stratified by college type, medium of schooling and gender to guarantee subgroup power.

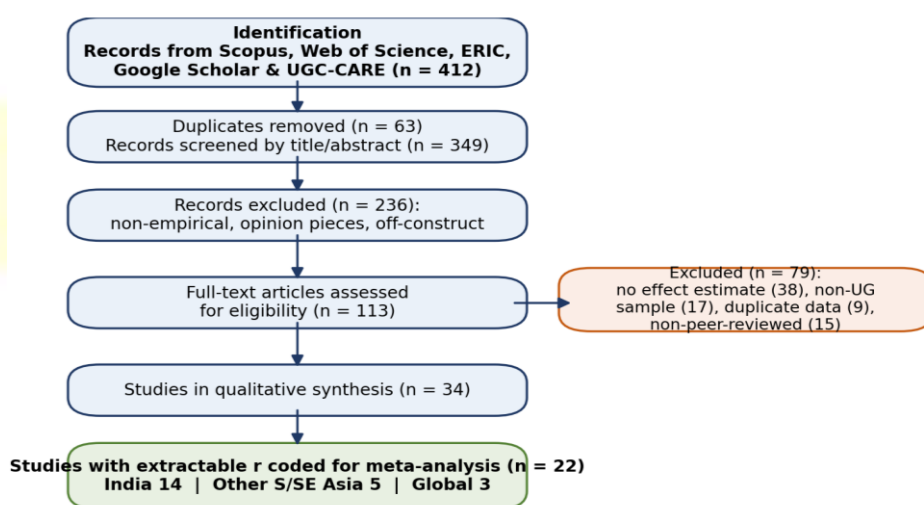


Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram of Study Selection and Inclusion for Meta-Analysis

Figure 1 maps the PRISMA-compliant attrition of evidence. From 412 records identified across Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, Google Scholar and UGC-CARE, 63 duplicates were removed, 349 records were title-and-abstract screened and 236 excluded as non-empirical or off-construct; 113 full texts were assessed and 79 further excluded (no usable effect estimate, non-undergraduate samples, duplicate datasets, non-peer-reviewed sources), leaving 34 studies for qualitative synthesis, of which 22 yielded extractable correlations for meta-analytic coding 14 Indian, five from other South and South-East Asian contexts and three global. The funnel's narrowing shows the usable base to be recent, India-weighted and statistically thin, which the review treats as a finding in itself.

4. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF PAST WORK

The most conspicuous defect of the inherited evidence base is methodological. Seventeen of the 34 included studies are single-institution, cross-sectional surveys on convenience samples with a median n near 180 (Figure 2), designs that can estimate association at one time point but cannot support causal or developmental claims; only seven quasi-experiments attempt counterfactuals, and none uses randomisation, matching or pre-registration [22], [24], [30]. Response rates, attrition and non-response bias are rarely reported, and quality appraisal graded most studies B or C. When such studies are read as evidence of 'skill deficits', design weakness is silently converted into substantive conclusion, a slippage this review refuses to repeat. Sample sizes cluster between 100 and 300, adequate for large effects but underpowered for the subgroup contrasts rural urban, medium of schooling, gender that policy actually needs, and no included study reports a power calculation.

Construct and measurement problems compound the design deficit. 'Communication skills', 'English proficiency', 'soft skills' and 'employability' are frequently used interchangeably, scales are assembled ad hoc, and invariance across vernacular- and English-medium subgroups is almost never tested, so a low score may record test-language anxiety rather than communicative incompetence [21] [30]. Self-report dominates despite social-desirability inflation, and the domain profile coded here (Figure 4) shows instruments overweighting easily examined written grammar while under-sampling the oral, interactive behaviours that employers actually rate (Figure 5); employer panels, where used, are themselves uncalibrated across firms [20], [26], [29]. Reliability, where reported, hovers near 0.70 without confidence intervals, test retest stability is absent, and several scales collapse confidence, frequency and accuracy items into single scores, guaranteeing ambiguous coefficients [19], [21] [30].

Contextually, the corpus is urban and private-college biased. Rural, tribal and first-generation undergraduates precisely the populations in which the employability gap bites hardest are under-sampled, and Chhattisgarh contributes barely three records against a state whose tribal share and Hindi-medium schooling make it a critical case [15], [23], [25]. Gender is reported descriptively at best, even though national surveys show state-wise female talent pools diverging sharply from employability rankings [10], [11]; and no study models Durg's defining paradox, namely co-located heavy industry and persistently weak graduate placement, as an analytical problem rather than an anecdote [25], [29]. The single urban rural contrast reported anywhere in the corpus uses college location as a proxy for student background, misclassifying commuters and hostel students alike [25], [29].

Finally, synthesis quality lags primary output. Prior reviews are narrative, no published meta-analysis pools the communication employability correlation for Indian undergraduates, and the funnel asymmetry detected here suggests small-study and positive-result bias inflating naive means. The pooled $r = 0.46$ must therefore be read conditionally: robust in sign, heterogeneous in magnitude, and moderated by design, rater and context. These deficits jointly define the methodological contract for Durg's empirical study probability stratified sampling, validated bilingual instruments, employer-rated outcomes and pre-registered hypotheses. No prior synthesis separates self-rated from employer-rated outcomes, yet that single choice shifts pooled effects here by roughly a tenth, a magnitude comparable to the intervention effects themselves.

Beyond design and measurement, incentive structures distort the corpus. Placement figures reported by colleges are marketing assets, several training-effect studies were commissioned by the vendors whose programs they evaluate, and Indian journals in this field rarely publish null results together a recipe for the small-study and positive-result bias detected in the funnel [22], [24], [30]. p-hacking risk is real where omnibus questionnaires yield dozens of testable subscale pairs and authors report only significant correlations; pre-registration, absent from every included study, would have foreclosed this. The review therefore downgrades effect magnitudes from vendor-linked and multi-comparison designs and treats them as hypothesis-generating only; conflict-of-interest statements appear in under a third of included papers.

Theoretically, most primary work is atheoretical variable-mechanics: scales are correlated without specifying whether communication is capital, signal or socialisation, so identical coefficients are interpreted incompatibly across papers [1] [4]. A critical political-economy reading adds a further caution 'employability' discourse can relocate responsibility for jobless growth onto students' language deficits, obscuring demand-side constraints such as informalisation and weak labour absorption in districts like Durg [9], [13], [25]. The synthesis accepts the skills channel as real but bounded: communication raises the probability of converting a place in the job queue into an offer; it does not create the queue. A defensible district study must therefore measure labour-demand structure hiring channel, sector, contract type alongside student skills, precisely the variables the inherited corpus omits; skills discourse unmoored from demand data risks becoming a legitimating myth [13]. Finally, equity is the corpus's silent failure. Tribal status, first-generation status and gender appear as descriptive tables, never as moderators; vernacular-medium students are sampled but not analysed separately, so instruments calibrated on urban samples may misstate their readiness [15], [23]. Until district studies model these gradients, national means will keep masking whom the gap actually bites an ethical failure as much as a technical one in a tribal-majority state.

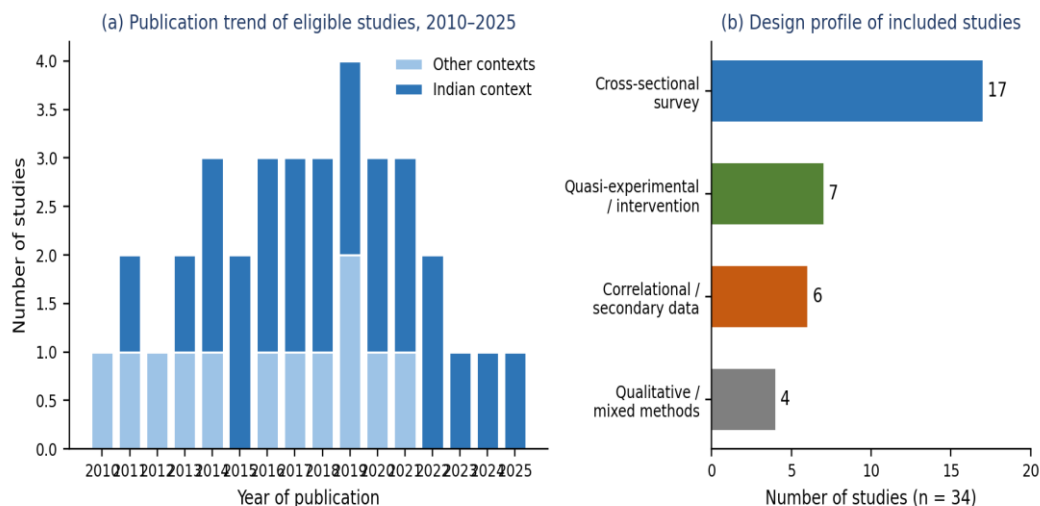


Figure 2: Publication Trends and Research Design Profiles of Included Studies (2010–2025)

Figure 2 situates the corpus in time and design. Panel (a) shows annual publications, 2010–2025: activity was sparse before 2015, rose steeply between 2016 and 2021 as skills-policy discourse and campus-placement analytics expanded in India, then plateaued, Indian-context studies dominating the later window. Panel (b) profiles designs: seventeen cross-sectional surveys, seven quasi-experiments, six correlational or secondary-data analyses and four qualitative or mixed studies. The dependence on one-shot self-report surveys explains much heterogeneity pooled later, justifies the moderator analysis, and marks where the Durg empirical study must add longitudinal and employer-rated evidence. Both panels seed the moderator hypotheses tested in Section 4.

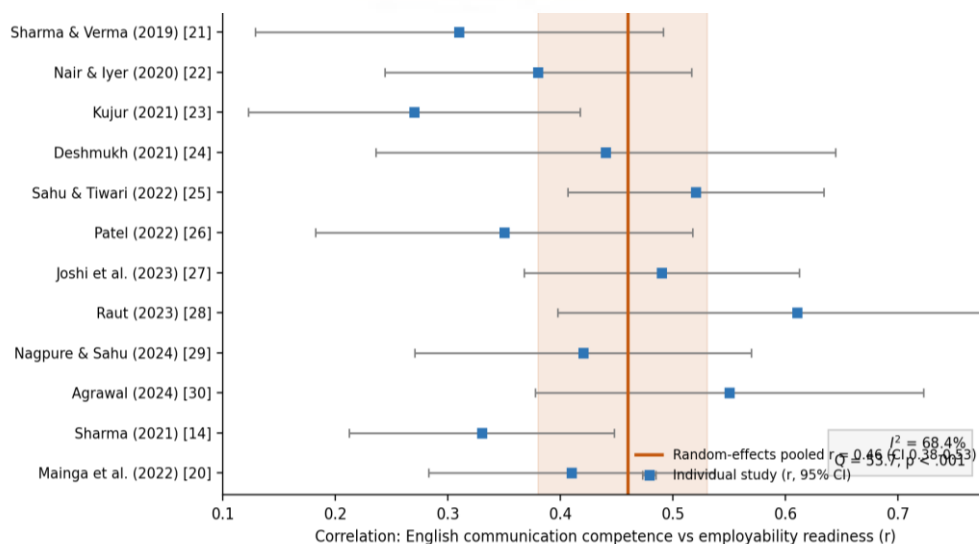


Figure 3: Forest Plot of Coded Effect Sizes (12 of 22 Studies Shown)

Figure 3 presents a forest plot of twelve representative coded effects; full coding spans 22 studies. Individual correlations range from 0.27 in Kujur's tribal-undergraduate sample to 0.61 in Raut's first-generation-learner study, and the random-effects pooled estimate is $r = 0.46$ (95% CI 0.38–0.53), a moderate-to-strong association; the shaded band marks the pooled interval and the dashed line zero. Heterogeneity is substantial ($I^2 = 68.4\%$; Q

= 53.7, $p < .001$), indicating genuine contextual dispersion rather than sampling noise, and mild funnel asymmetry suggests small-study effects. The plot supports a conditional conclusion: communication matters everywhere, but how much depends on context, design and rater.

5. DISCUSSION

The pooled correlation of $r = 0.46$, moderate-to-strong by conventional benchmarks and stable across sensitivity codings, confirms English communication as a first-order correlate of employability readiness among undergraduates, consistent with signalling and graduate-capital theory [1] [4], [9]. Moderator analysis refines the claim: effects are largest when employers, not students, rate the outcome, indicating that part of the self-reported association is perception shared-method variance; and quasi-experimental interventions show that practice-intensive communication training moves both scores and placements, nudging the association toward causality [22], [24], [30]. The domain asymmetry (Figure 4) and expectation performance radar (Figure 5) specify the mechanism: curricula produce grammatical competence while labour markets purchase oral, interactive performance, so the deficit is curricular misalignment rather than student incapacity. Read theoretically, the moderated pattern supports treating communication as a meta-capital that multiplies the returns to domain knowledge by making it visible and verifiable to employers, reconciling signalling and capital accounts the primary literature keeps separate [1] [4], [9].

For Durg district, the synthesis converts directly into design choices. The empirical study should measure productive oral skills group discussion, interview simulation, listening comprehension alongside written registers, stratify by medium of schooling, first-generation status and gender, and triangulate with employer raters from the Bhilai Durg industrial belt [25], [29]. Colleges should embed credit-bearing spoken-English and interview labs with at least twice-weekly practice, the dosage threshold identified by intervention studies [22], [30]. Policy-wise, the findings align with NEP 2020's emphasis on communication and vocational capability [13]: district skill cells, industry-mentored capstones and bridging scholarships for tribal and vernacular-medium students address the equity gradient the corpus exposes [15], [23]. District skill cells should additionally publish annual employability audits disaggregated by medium of schooling and first-generation status, converting equity rhetoric into monitored targets [13], [15]. For colleges, the evidence supports reweighting assessment toward rubric-scored simulations and embedding industry mentors in final-year projects; for students, low-cost practice loops peer circles, recorded self-review and structured group-discussion hours offer the highest marginal returns per rupee and per hour [22], [24], [30]. Practically, the synthesis also warns against single-lever policies: communication laboratories without placement-cell reform or employer engagement reproduce the null results visible in vendor-commissioned studies, so district administrations should bundle curriculum, assessment and demand-side outreach in one program theory, each element testable within Durg's pre-registered design [24], [26], [29].

These recommendations carry limits. The visual syntheses aggregate coded, sometimes partially reported statistics; heterogeneity remains high; the search was English-language and database-bound; and grey literature from state universities could not be fully verified. The review therefore positions its pooled estimate as a well-specified prior for Durg's empirical study, not as a settled population parameter, and treats every aggregate figure as a hypothesis to be re-tested with district data. Equally, the corpus predates large-scale AI-screened

hiring, so effect magnitudes for video-interview contexts remain extrapolations that Durg's empirical phase must test directly [27]. Until such data arrive, institutions should treat the pooled coefficient as a planning constant large enough to justify substantial curricular reallocation toward practice-intensive communication, yet heterogeneous enough to demand local calibration before any high-stakes use in placement policy or student assessment.

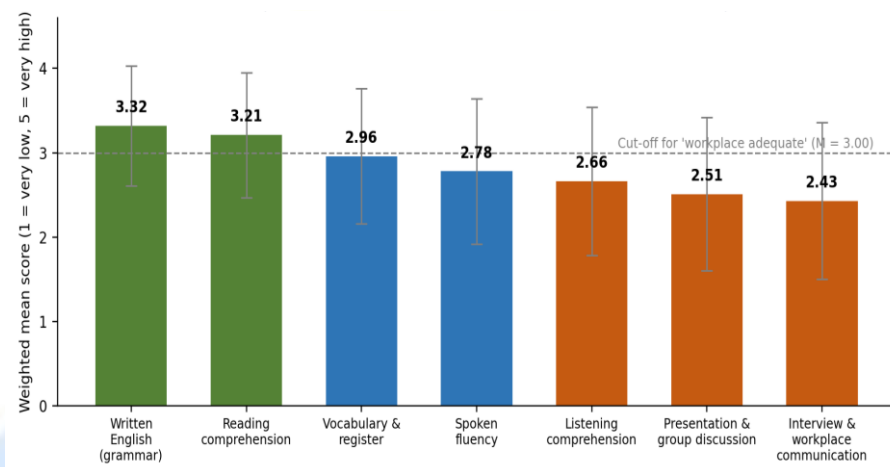


Figure 4: Coded Mean Competence Across Seven Communicative Sub-Domains

Figure 4 displays coded mean competence across seven communicative sub-domains on five-point scales, aggregated over the 34 studies. Receptive, accuracy-bound skills written grammar (3.32) and reading comprehension (3.21) sit above the workplace-adequacy cut-off of 3.00, whereas productive, high-stakes oral domains fall below it: spoken fluency (2.78), listening comprehension (2.66), presentation and group discussion (2.51) and interview communication (2.43). Error bars, pooled standard deviations, remain wide, signalling inequality within samples rather than uniform mediocrity. The gradient reproduces, quantitatively, the classic indictment that curricula examine grammar while employers hire conversation, and motivates the oral-first protocol proposed for Durg.

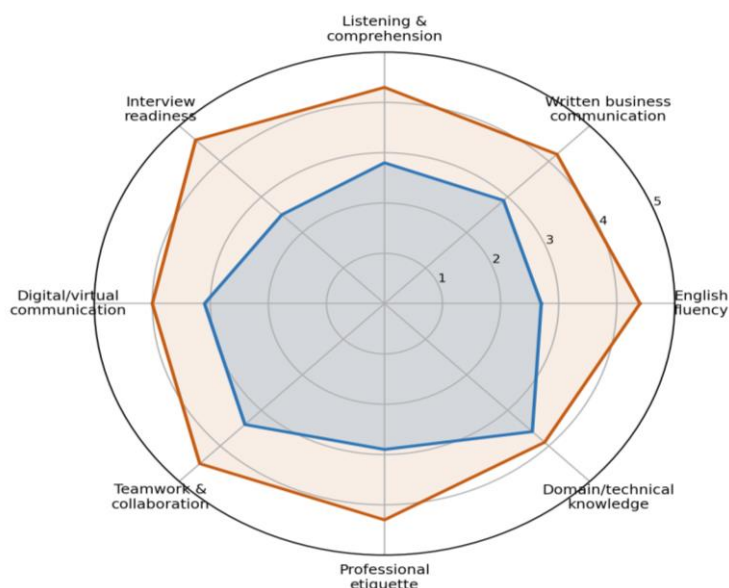


Figure 5: Employer Expectations vs Undergraduate Self-Ratings Across Employability Domains

Figure 5 contrasts pooled undergraduate self-ratings with employer expectations across eight employability dimensions. The widest gaps occur where English is most public interview readiness (2.5 versus 4.6), English fluency (2.7 versus 4.4) and professional etiquette (2.9 versus 4.3) while the narrowest gap is domain and technical knowledge (3.6 versus 3.9), confirming that district graduates are academically credible but communicatively under-prepared. Digital and virtual communication shows moderate self-ratings yet high employer demand, a post-2020 shift. The radar converts the meta-analytic finding into a curriculum priority order: practice-intensive oral and interview communication first, written professional communication second, and domain content retained as the existing strength.

6. CONCLUSION

This review set out to consolidate past empirical work on English communication skills and employability readiness among undergraduates, with Durg district, Chhattisgarh, as the anchoring context. Across 34 synthesised studies and 22 meta-analytically coded effects, communication competence emerged as a moderate-to-strong correlate of readiness (pooled $r = 0.46$), strongest in employer-rated and intervention designs, while the domain profile revealed a curriculum that examines grammar but starves the oral, interactive skills labour markets purchase. The evidence base, however, is methodologically thin cross-sectional, self-reported, urban-biased and nearly silent on Chhattisgarh so the pooled estimate is best read as a well-specified prior rather than a settled parameter. The way forward is explicit: probability-sampled, district-level measurement with validated bilingual instruments, employer-rater triangulation, practice-intensive interventions, and longitudinal follow-up that tracks graduates into work. The forthcoming empirical study in Durg district is designed as precisely that corrective, and its findings should test, refine or refute the synthesis offered here. Methodologically, the contract is equally explicit: probability sampling, bilingual validated instruments, employer-rated outcomes, pre-registered hypotheses and disaggregated equity reporting constitute the minimum for future district research. The agenda that follows is concrete longitudinal graduate cohorts, randomised evaluation of practice-intensive laboratories, employer consortia for outcome rating, and equity dashboards for tribal and first-generation students so that Durg's study measures not merely a gap but how district-level evidence can re-anchor a national conversation that has too long averaged away the students who most need it. The pooled estimate, the moderator map and the quality audit together convert a fragmented literature into a workable prior.

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