A Study on the Expectations of Modern Day Students in Developing Their English Language Communication Skills

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ABSTRACT*: The 21st century students live in an over demanding world which is technologically developing and constantly changing at a pace that has never been seen before. They are expected to keep the pace if they want to be successful in their future career. Having an excellent command over English language communication skills is a key requirement of today's firms and companies from their employees. In turn, the students, having witnessed and experienced the impact of technology, expect certain innovative patterns and methods to be incorporated in the process of developing their English language communication skills. This paper tries to explore and analyse the high expectations of modern day students in improving their communication skills. This study also aims to help English teachers identify and meet the needs and aspirations of their students in helping them develop their communication skills.*

KEYWORDS – *English communication skills, expectations, online activities, students, technology.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary youth live in an era that has witnessed a great impact of technology in every field from automobiles to aviation, from banking to business, from communication to tourism, from industry to medicine and from entertainment to education. This generation has grown up with computer games, the Internet and mobile phones and would like to incorporate this technology into every walk of their lives, realising that they wouldn't stand a chance out there in the real world otherwise. They are aware of the fact that English is a widely spoken language in the world and is used in various fields such as business, medicine, science, and technology. They have also understood that if their communication skills are not up to the expectations of the employers, their chances are very limited on the job market where high level of English communication skills is an important requisite.

II. MODERN DAY STUDENTS

Technology has reshaped the present world in full force and its greatest influence can be seen on the contemporary youth who are precisely called "net-savvy generation" or "digital natives" [1] due to their absolute dependence on technology in general and the internet in particular. According to **Gustavo S. Mesch (2009)**, these terms are used to refer to a large group of adolescents who grow up in a media-rich environment with the computer and the internet, playing online games, and surfing for information with the help of mobile devices. They exploit the digital spaces to communicate, express, and create. Having been netted by the technology in this immersed-in-the-Internet age, these young people have multiple e-mail ids and prefer being online 24x7. Staying connected with friends is so essential for them that smart phones and gear watches have become their inseparable companions.

Since anything and everything related to technology is interesting and fascinating to this generation's young people, when it comes to their academics and studies, they expect the subjects they learn, the methods used to instruct, and the means exploited to deliver the message to be closely knitted with the net. However, not only the attitudes and expectations of the students have changed, but also the attitudes and approaches of educational institutions, be it a school, college, or university, have been highly influenced by the impact of technology, especially in designing, producing, and delivering the courses offered. There is a big shift from formal traditional classroom environment to more interactive atmosphere, from content-based to skill-based methodology and from teacher-centered to learner-centered approach, teacher being more a mentor than a tutor or instructor. More and more educational institutions around the globe have started integrating web-based learning as well as online education or e-learning.

III.   ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

In this competitive world, companies and firms expect their employees to have powerful communication skills to be successful at the workplace. Communication means exchanging information from one person to the other person. As quoted by Dr. R.K. Singla (2011) [2], "Communication is the process of passing information and understanding from one person to another." It is more than mere speaking. Communication skills are the tools used to execute the process of communication. Though speaking and writing are the commonly recognised communication skills in English, listening and reading skills are very important in achieving these two skills.   When a person speaks to express his thoughts, there must be another person to listen to him; otherwise it is not a communication. Similarly, when a person writes something to convey his ideas or opinions, the receiver should be able to read and understand the message being conveyed. In this way, the LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) skills are very essential to be mastered by each employee whose pursuit is to become a confident English speaker, so that he can communicate clearly and effectively with his boss, colleagues, and clients at the place of work.

IV.   REVIEW OF LITERATURE

For more than a decade, **Mark McCrindle** (2014) has researched on the emerging generations in Australia and their expectations. In his book 'the ABC of XYZ', he has named the modern youth in Australia as the "digital integrators" because "they have integrated technology seamlessly into their lives, and having used it from the youngest age, it is almost like the air that they breathe, permeating almost all areas of their lifestyle and relationships." [3] McCrindle has postulated that education is no longer life-stage dependant, but a life-long reality. He has pointed out that as the demand for online education is increasing, the next generation may obtain their degrees online, spending less time in the traditional classroom and more in a cafe or their home.

McCrindle (2015) states that the 21st Century classrooms are being reconfigured (and rewired!) to accommodate new students, new technologies and new learning styles. [4] He further argues that it is not that today's learners are failing the education system but rather that the education system is failing today's learners. According to McCrindle, the teacher was the main source of the knowledge and learning in the past, but today due to the impact of technology, any amount of information is available in a click of a button and so the teacher's traditional role is replaced by teacher as a facilitator of the learning.

Yeddu Vijaya Babu (2013) has done a research on enhancing communication skills through ELCS (English Language Communication Skills) Labs, in which he proposed that language labs play a vital role in acquiring relevant skills effectively. He pointed out that ELCS labs help students develop communicative competence and provide ample opportunities in different language learning modules. It also gives opportunity to utilize multimedia resources.   He also tried to prove the considerable difference in improvement found between the normal classroom learners and language lab learners. According to Babu, the study has disclosed several facts related to ELCS labs in developing the communication skills of the college students, mainly helping to solve the communication problems of the rural area students, developing the student autonomy while learning, and also growing passion in students for learning and imbibing communication skills to excel in their careers. [5]

Speaking is considered one of the most important communication skills. **Yulia Morozova** (2013) has conducted a study to identify the causes for the inability among the Russian school children in improving their English speaking skills and find out solutions for this prevailing problem. [6] Morozova has pointed out that it is very difficult to survive successfully in an era of competition without a working knowledge of English language and good communication skills. She also has shown how different measures have been taken by various scholars to help Russian students improve their spoken English skills using different teaching methods and approaches. One reason identified by Morozova is lack of confidence and fear in students about making mistaking while speaking. She recognised the possible methods in encouraging the students in improving their speaking skills. Utilising modern technology is one of many methods suggested by Morozova where the Internet communication skills are emerging in English language teaching. According to Morozova, web-based resources and useful educational sites provide new possibilities and latest trends for teachers and students. In a non-threatening way, students can learn and improve their communication skills with the help of tools such as skype, email, blogs, chat, and mobile devices.

Of the four English language skills which are LSRW, listening and speaking skills are often considered neglected skills, because most of the educational institutions give more importance in developing reading and writing skills of students. **Paramisvari Rama Naidu (2015)**, in her article on developing listening and speaking skills of the Taiwan students using language labs, states that most Taiwan schools have developed exam-oriented curriculum where focus is given more on reading and writing skills. [7] As a result, students find

speaking as the most difficult skill even after they graduate from colleges. Having realised the importance of listening and speaking skills, the universities have attempted to offer spoken English classes to large groups in language labs where different innovative approaches are applied. Listening to material and discussing in groups and pairs, speaking on a microphone and recording their speech, and practicing these two skills using online components are some of the approaches implemented to mention among others. Rama has noted that the students' feedback proved that their expectations in improving their language skills were fulfilled, in that the modern approaches motivated them, reduced their fear, and increased their confidence in speaking English language.

When it comes to students' perception, students always develop positive and negative attitudes toward English language communication skills. While some of them think positively that these skills are important not only in their academic and career world, but also in their personal life, others are very pessimistic about it thinking that technical skills are more important than communication skills. **Fathi M. Ihmeideh, Aieman Ahmad Al-Omari, and Kholoud A. Al-Dababneh** (2010) from Hashemite University, Jordan have aptly done a study on the student-teachers' attitudes towards developing their communication skills in order to accomplish their responsibilities effectively. [8] They have suggested that teachers must possess advanced communication skills, so that they can communicate with their management, learners, and colleagues efficiently. The results of their study have proved that the senior students have high positive attitudes toward communication skills realising the fact once they finish the university and get it the teaching profession, high communication skills are required to be successful teachers.

V.   THE STUDY

1.1   Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this study is to identify the expectations of modern day students in developing their English language communication skills. The outcomes will help the teachers meet the students' aspirations in helping them develop their communication skills.

1.2   Research Objectives
This study has been undertaken with the following objectives:

- To identify the top English language communication skills the modern day students would like to improve
- To find out various factors such as the type of learning environment, the mentor, the methods, and the modes that the modern day students would prefer in developing their communication skills
- To identify the top most ways in which the modern day students would like to learn new vocabulary in English
- To find out the modern day students' priority in the means of correcting their mistakes made during language learning
- To find out the ways in which the modern day students would like to find out their English language learning improvement
- To provide English teachers with suitable suggestions in developing the English language communication skills of modern day students

1.3 Questionnaire
In this study, an author-designed questionnaire was administered to collect information on modern day students' expectations in developing their English language communication skills. The questionnaire comprised 2 parts. The first part consisted of 6 questions explaining the personal details of the respondents and the second part had 10 major questions pertaining the respondents' expectations in developing their communication skills. Each question had several supporting items (total of 57 items) with the measuring scale of 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 indicating Always, Very often, Often, Sometimes, and Never.

1.4 The Respondents
There were 70 participants who responded the questionnaire. They were randomly taken from the University of Bahrain, Bahrain from three different sections: 24 students from first year orientation programme, 31students from second year IT, and 15 students from second year Science stream. These 70 students completed the questionnaire during the English lesson.

1.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation
1.5.1 Part 1 Personal Details
Data in the first part of the questionnaire were analysed with the help of statistical tool called percentage calculation. There were six questions related to their personal details. Of the 70 respondents, there were 43

female students (61.4%) and 27 male students (38.6%). It is concluded that majority of the respondents were female. 78.6% (55) of the respondents were in the age group of below 21 years, 17.1% (12) of them were in the age group of 21 to 25 years, and 4.3% (3) of them were in the age group of above 25 years. Thus, more than three-fourth, i.e., 78.6% of the respondents were in the age group of below 21 years. Regarding the nationality of the respondents, 75.7% (53) of the respondents were Arabs, whereas 24.3% (17) were non-Arabs.

Moreover, it is inferred that 32.1% (26) of the respondents lived in city, 40.0% (28) of them in town, and 22.9%(16) of them in village. Therefore, nearly half (40.0%) of the respondents were from town. In regard to the family background, 47.1%(33) of the respondents were from joint family and 52.9% (37) from nuclear family. It is understood that more than half of the respondents (52.9%) were from joint family background. Finally, 4.3%(3) of the respondents were doing diploma courses whereas 95.7%(67) of them were pursuing bachelor degree courses. So, it is concluded that vast majority (95.7%) of the respondents were undergraduate students.

1.5.2   Part 2 Expectations of the Modern Day Students in Developing their Communication Skills

Data in the second part of the questionnaire comprised 10 relational questions based on modern day students' expectations in developing their English language communication skills. The reliability statistics measuring tool called **Cronbach's Alpha** was applied to find out the internal consistency of the 57 items included in part 2.

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
0.753	57

The result in the above table indicates that the reliability coefficient of the items is 0.753 which is the level of nearly 80%. Thus, the internal reliability of the measures used in the study is considered good enough to proceed with the interpretation.

The analysis of part 2 of the questionnaire was done based on **Friedman Test** which is a non-parametric statistical testing tool.

Q1. Which English language skills would you like to improve?

Table 1

S.No	English Language Skills to be Improved	Mean Rank	Rank
1.	Listening	2.84	6
2.	Speaking	3.62	3
3.	Reading	3.09	5
4.	Writing	4.30	1
5.	Vocabulary	3.36	4
6.	Grammar	3.79	2

Interpretation

It is inferred from Table 1 that improvement required for English language writing skill stands first rank (mean rank: 4.30), followed by improvement required for Grammar skill which stands second rank (mean rank: 3.79), improvement required for speaking skill stands third rank (mean rank: 3.62), improvement required for vocabulary stands fourth rank (mean rank : 3.36), improvement required for reading skill stands fifth rank (mean rank: 3.09) and improvement required for listening skill stands sixth rank (mean rank: 2.84). Thus, it is understood that writing, grammar, and speaking are the top three language skills the modern day students expect to improve.

Q2. What type of learning environment would you prefer in improving your language skills?

Table 2

S.No	Learning Environment Preferred in Improving Language Skills	Mean Rank	Rank
1.	Traditional classroom	3.17	3
2.	Private language institutes	1.97	5
3.	Real life situation	3.97	1
4.	Language labs	2.61	4
5.	e-learning environment	3.28	2

Interpretation

It is inferred from Table 2 that real life situation environment stands first rank (mean rank: 3.97) in improving language skills, followed by e-learning environment stands second rank (mean rank: 3.28), Traditional classroom stand third rank (mean rank: 3.17), language labs stands fourth rank (mean rank: 2.61) and private language institutes stands fifth rank (mean rank: 1.97) in improving language skills. So, it is concluded that real life situation and e-learning environment are the first two top learning environments selected by the modern day students in developing their language skills, whereas traditional classroom environment is pushed back to third place.

Q3. Who would you like to be your mentor in improving your English language skills?

Table 3

S.No	Type of Mentor Preferred in Improving English Language Skills	Mean Rank	Rank
1.	English teacher	3.89	1
2.	Private tutor	2.29	2
3.	Peer	1.87	4
4.	Well-wisher who has excellent command over English	1.95	3

Interpretation

It is inferred from Table 3 that English teacher stands first rank (mean rank: 3.89) as the type of mentor in improving English language skills, followed by private tutor standing second (mean rank: 2.29), Well-wisher who has excellent command over English standing third (mean rank: 1.95), and peer standing fourth (mean rank: 1.87). Therefore, it is understood that students' priority in the type of mentor needed in helping them improve their English is English teacher.

Q4. What learning method do you prefer for in-class learning?

Table 4

S.No	Learning Method Preferred for In-class Learning	Mean Rank	Rank
1.	Individually	3.04	1
2.	In pairs	2.69	2
3.	In small groups	2.46	3
4.	In one large group	1.81	4

Interpretation

It is inferred from Table 4 that individual learning method preferred for in-class learning stands first rank (mean rank: 3.04), followed by learning in pairs learning standing second (mean rank : 2.69), learning in small groups standing third (mean rank: 2.46), and learning in one large group standing fourth (mean rank : 1.81). So, it is concluded that individual learning is the top most preferred learning method of modern day students, working in pairs and small groups being second and third choices.

Q5. Which language skills would you like to use in learning?

Table 5

S.No	Language Skills to use in Learning	Mean Rank	Rank
1.	Listening and speaking	4.96	1
2.	Copying from the board	3.17	4
3.	Listening and taking notes	4.44	2
4.	Reading and making notes	3.04	5
5.	Repeating what you hear	1.91	6
6.	Writing summaries	3.47	3

Interpretation

It is inferred from Table 5 that in language skills preferred by students to use in learning English, listening and speaking stands first rank (mean rank: 4.96), followed by listening and taking notes standing second (mean rank: 4.44), writing summaries skills standing third (mean rank: 3.47), copying from the board standing fourth (mean rank: 3.17), reading and making notes standing fifth (mean rank: 3.04) and repeating what you heard skills standing last (mean rank: 1.91). Thus, it is understood that listening and speaking and listening and taking notes are the top two language skills modern day students prefer using while learning English language skills.

Q6. How would you like to learn new vocabulary in English?

Table 6

S.No	*Learning New Vocabulary in English*	*Mean Rank*	*Rank*
1.	By using new words in a sentence	5.97	1
2.	By understanding a new word in its context	5.53	3
3.	By saying or writing words several times	2.09	8
4.	By understanding its meaning in mother tongue	3.99	6
5.	By reading without looking up for word meaning	2.62	7
6.	By watching and listening English progammes on TV	4.86	5
7.	By watching English movies	5.63	2
8.	By doing online English language exercises	5.31	4

Interpretation

It is inferred from Table 6 that in learning new vocabulary in English, using new words in a sentence, stands first rank (mean rank: 5.97), followed by watching English movies standing second (mean rank: 5.63), understanding a new word in its context standing third (mean rank:5.53), doing online English language exercises standing fourth (mean rank: 5.31), watching and listening English progammes on TV standing fifth (mean rank 4.86), understanding its meaning in mother tongue standing sixth (mean rank: 3.99), reading without looking up for word meaning standing seventh (mean rank: 2.62), and saying or writing words several times standing last (mean rank: 2.09). Therefore, it is concluded that modern day students like to learn new vocabulary in English by using new words in a sentence, by watching English movies, by understanding a new word in its context, and by doing online English language exercises as the top four methods.

Q7. What type of resources would you like to be used in developing your language skills?

Table 7

S.No	Type of Resources to be used in Developing Language Skills	Mean Rank	Rank
1.	From printed material	4.81	**2**
2.	From audio	3.01	**6**
3.	From video	3.44	**5**
4.	From tape recorder	1.58	**7**
5.	From television	4.39	**4**
6.	From English language software	4.76	**3**
7.	From English Language websites	6.01	**1**

Interpretation

It is inferred from Table 7 that English Language websites, preferred to be used in developing language skills, stands first rank (mean rank: 6.01), followed by printed material standing second rank (mean rank: 4.81), English language software mode standing third rank (mean rank: 4.76), television mode standing fourth rank (mean rank: 4.39), video mode standing fifth rank (mean rank : 3.44), audio mode standing sixth rank (mean rank: 3.01) and tape recorder mode standing seventh rank (mean rank: 1.58). So, it is concluded that English language websites are the top resource type preferred by modern day students in developing their language skills, whereas printed material still is their second choice.

Q8. What type of activities would you like to be used in the English language classes?

Table 8

S.No	Type of Activities to be used in English Language Classes	Mean Rank	Rank
1.	Role play	4.30	**5**
2.	Language games	4.21	**6**
3.	Songs	2.04	**8**
4.	Pair work	5.29	**2**
5.	Group work	4.76	**4**
6.	Group discussions on particular topics	3.24	**7**
7.	Listening and speaking activities using language software	5.09	**3**
8.	Online activities	7.06	**1**

Interpretation

It is inferred from Table 8 that online activities, preferred to be used in the English language classes, stands first rank (mean rank: 7.06), followed by pair work standing second rank (mean rank: 5.29), listening and speaking activities using language software standing third rank (mean rank: 5.09), group work activities standing fourth rank (mean rank: 4.76), role play activities standing fifth rank (mean rank: 4.76), language games standing sixth rank (mean rank: 4.21), group discussions on particular topics standing seventh rank (mean rank: 3.24) and songs standing eighth rank (mean rank: 2.04). So, it is concluded that regarding the type of activities to be used in English language classes, the top three priorities of modern day students are online activities, pair work, and role play.

Q9. How would you prefer your mistake to in English language learning to be corrected?

Table 9

S.No	Mistakes in English Language Learning to be Corrected	Mean Rank	Rank
1.	Immediately, in front of everyone	2.76	**3**
2.	Later at the end of the activity	3.72	**2**
3.	Later in front of everyone	2.50	**4**
4.	Later in private	4.11	**1**
5.	Don't wish to be corrected	1.91	**5**

Interpretation

It is inferred from Table 9 that in the preferred method of correcting mistakes in English language learning, later in private stands first rank (mean rank: 4.11), followed by later at the end of the activity standing second rank (mean rank: 3.72), immediately in front of everyone standing third rank (mean rank: 2.76), later in front of everyone standing fourth rank (mean rank: 2.50), and don't wish to be corrected standing last rank (mean rank: 1.91). Thus, since "Don't wish to be corrected" is the last preference, it is concluded that modern day students wish their mistakes to be corrected, but not immediately in front of everyone but later in private or later at the end of the activity.

Q10. How would you like to find out your English language improvement?

Table 10

S.No	How To find out English Language Improvement	Mean Rank	Rank
1.	By doing written tasks set by the teacher	3.31	**1**
2.	By using the language you have learned in real-life situations	2.72	**3**
3.	By taking paid placement tests like TOEFL and IELTS	1.24	**4**
4.	By taking free online tests	2.74	**2**

Interpretation

It is inferred from Table 10 that doing written tasks set by the teacher method, preference in finding out English language improvement, stands first rank (mean rank: 3.31), followed by taking free online tests method standing second rank (mean rank: 2.74), using the language learned in real-life situations method standing third rank (mean rank: 2.72), and taking paid placement tests like TOEFL and IELTS standing fourth rank (mean rank: 2.74). Thus, it is concluded that modern day students' top two priorities in checking their English language improvement are by doing written tasks set by teacher and by taking online test.

VI.   SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS

The following are the overall summary of data interpretation and some suggestions for the English language teachers that would help them in meeting the needs and expectations of modern day students in improving their English language communication skills. The attitudes and demands of modern day students are vastly different from the conventional expectations of the students of the past generations.

Though writing, grammar, and speaking are the top three language skills the modern day students expect to improve, they don't prefer the traditional classroom environment. Rather they prefer real life situation and e-learning environment as they are with the realistic attitude of learning by doing and are more in touch with the modern technology. So, the English teachers can create real life situation appropriate to the target language skill and also can exploit e-learning resources in teaching English. Moreover, they prefer their teacher to play the role of a mentor or facilitator than of a knowledge giving source. Instead of large group learning, the modern day students prefer learning in-class first individually, second in pairs, and third in small groups. For this, the teachers can assign the students more independent tasks and also engage them in pair works and group works than putting them in a big group which will divert their attention.

The modern day students like to use listening and speaking and listening and note taking methods in learning. When learning new words in English, they prefer learning by using the new words in sentences and in contexts than understanding the word meaning in mother tongue, and also they prefer watching English movies and doing online exercises in this process. So, the English teachers can help the students by giving context based activities and online exercises. Not only that, the study shows that modern day students prefer English language websites to conventional learning resources, but their second top preferred resource is printed material. This encourages the English language teachers to use blended teaching (traditional and web-based teaching) in their English classes. The students also expect the teachers to integrate online activities, pair works, and role play rather than using traditional types of activities.

The study has also revealed that the students expect their mistakes to be corrected but in an informal way. They expect not to be corrected immediately in front of other students, but later in private or at the end of the activity. So, the English teachers should take great care during the error correction stage. In a non-intimidating way, they can spend their office hours in helping the students understand and correct the language errors. Finally, it is also shown by the study that teacher-set tasks and free online tests are the top two measuring tools the modern day students prefer using when they want to find out their improvement in developing their communication skills. Therefore, the English teachers can create appropriate skill-based language quizzes and tests and also encourage the students to take online tests. These can be given as in-class activities or as homework.

VII.   CONCLUSION

Thus, the study on the Expectations of Modern Day Students in Developing Their English Communication Skills has disclosed several important facts about modern day students' expectations in developing their communication skills. Being constantly exposed to the latest technological gadgets which have become a part of life, like in every other field, the modern day students expect a significant amount of application of modern teaching and learning techniques and methods in educational field also. Instead of traditional classroom teaching techniques, they expect the English teachers to integrate real life situation, latest methods such as web-based learning, and more personalised learning.

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