

## **SPEAK UP, SHINE BRIGHT: INNOVATIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS PROGRAMMES FOR ASSAM'S YOUTH**

**Dr. Naraginti Amareswaran Reddy**

Assistant Professor, Department of Education, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya, e-mail: [amareswaran@gmail.com](mailto:amareswaran@gmail.com)

**Dr. Shrutashwinee Gogoi**

Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Moran College, Moranhat, Charaideo Dist., e-mail: [phukanshruti@gmail.com](mailto:phukanshruti@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

This paper underscores the critical role of communication skills in harnessing the potential of Assam's youth. By analyzing the current state of communication skills among Assam's youth, identifying key barriers to effective communication, and proposing innovative programs, this study advocates for a comprehensive approach to developing this essential skillset. There are a good number of ways to enhance communication skills. An individual in general and the youth in particular can enhance the communication skills by reading books, listening news, watching videos & movies, doing Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) courses, attending seminars/conference/workshops/symposium, through Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and attending training programmes. The paper aims to empower Assam's youth to become confident, articulate, and engaged contributors to society by equipping them with the necessary communication tools.

Keywords: Assam, Youth, Communication Skills, Skill Development, and Empowerment.

### **Introduction**

India's burgeoning youth population, a demographic powerhouse, holds immense potential for the nation's progress. Assam, a significant contributor to this demographic, has a substantial youth contingent brimming with energy and optimism. Recognizing the pivotal role of communication skills in unlocking this potential, this article delves into the importance of equipping Assam's youth with effective communication abilities.

By examining the current landscape of communication skills in the state, identifying key barriers, and proposing innovative programs, this piece advocates for a comprehensive approach to nurturing young talent. The goal is to empower Assam's youth to become confident, articulate, and engaged citizens who can contribute meaningfully to their communities and the nation at large. An individual in general and the youth in particular can enhance the communication skills by reading books, listening news, watching videos & movies, doing MOOC courses, attending seminars/conference/workshops/symposium, through AI & ICT, and attending training programmes.

### **Assam's Youth**

In India, the youth population (15-29 years old) accounts for approximately 27.5% of the total population, making it a significant demographic. The total population of Assam as

per the census 2011 is 31,205, 576. The youth population of Assam as per the census 2011 is 19.15% i.e., 59,77,986. Youth possess inherent energy and optimism, believing that anything is possible. It is the collective responsibility of the government, parents, and society to guide them in a positive direction through proper education and mentorship. Effective communication is crucial for development, making it essential to empower the youth of Assam with enhanced communication skills, enabling them to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to society.

### **Communication Skills**

Communication Skills are the abilities you use when giving and receiving different kinds of information. Communication skills involve listening, speaking, observing and empathising. 7 Cs of effective communication are: Clear, Concise, Concrete, Correct, Coherent, Complete, and Courteous.

### **Need for Communication Skills**

**Communication is the bedrock of human interaction, a bridge connecting people, ideas, and cultures.** It's indispensable in both personal and professional life. In our personal lives, effective communication fosters stronger relationships, aids in conflict resolution, and drives personal growth. Professionally, it's the key to career advancement, successful teamwork, inspiring leadership, building strong client relationships, and effective problem-solving. Communication is a multifaceted skill that profoundly impacts every aspect of our lives.

### **Types of Communication Skills**

- i. **Verbal Communication Skills:** Speaking, listening, and presenting ideas through words.
- ii. **Nonverbal Communication Skills:** Conveying messages through body language, facial expressions, tone, and gestures.
- iii. **Written Communication Skills:** Expressing ideas through writing, such as emails, reports, and letters.
- iv. **Visual Communication Skills:** Using images, videos, and graphics to convey information.
- v. **Interpersonal Communication Skills:** Building relationships, empathizing, and interacting with others.
- vi. **Public Speaking Skills:** Presenting ideas to large groups, audiences, or public forums.
- vii. **Active Listening Skills:** Fully engaging with and understanding others' messages.
- viii. **Conflict Resolution Skills:** Managing and resolving disagreements and disputes.
- ix. **Negotiation Skills:** Reaching mutually beneficial agreements through discussion.
- x. **Team Communication Skills:** Collaborating, coordinating, and sharing information with team members.
- xi. **Cross-Cultural Communication Skills:** Effectively communicating with people from diverse backgrounds.
- xii. **Technical Communication Skills:** Conveying complex information through clear, concise language.
- xiii. **Digital Communication Skills:** Using technology to communicate, such as social media, email, and instant messaging.

- xiv. **Emotional Intelligence Skills:** Recognizing and managing one's own emotions and those of others.
- xv. **Adaptive Communication Skills:** Adjusting communication style to suit different situations, audiences, and purposes.

Developing these communication skills can help youth/individuals become more effective and versatile communicators.

### **Speak Up, Shine Bright**

"Speak Up, Shine Bright" is a great phrase to encapsulate the importance of effective communication skills! Here are some key takeaways to help you "Speak Up" and "Shine Bright":

#### ***Speak Up:***

1. Confidence: Believe in yourself and your message.
2. Clarity: Clearly articulate your thoughts and ideas.
3. Conciseness: Get straight to the point and avoid rambling.
4. Courage: Share your opinions and thoughts, even if they differ from others.
5. Active Listening: Pay attention to others and respond thoughtfully.

#### ***Shine Bright:***

1. Authenticity: Be true to yourself and your values.
2. Passion: Share your enthusiasm and energy with others.
3. Empathy: Connect with others and show understanding.
4. Creativity: Find innovative ways to express yourself.
5. Positive Body Language: Use nonverbal cues to show engagement and enthusiasm.

By embracing these qualities, an individual can "Speak Up" with confidence and "Shine Bright" with authenticity, making a lasting impact in your personal and professional life!

### **Essential Communication Skills of Youth in Assam**

These essential communication skills can help youth in Assam to succeed in their personal, academic, and professional lives. The essential communication skills are:

1. **Verbal Communication:** Clear articulation of thoughts, ideas, and opinions.
2. **Active Listening:** Attentive listening to understand others' perspectives.
3. **Nonverbal Communication:** Effective use of body language, facial expressions, and eye contact.
4. **Emotional Intelligence:** Self-awareness, empathy, and social skills.
5. **Cultural Competence:** Understanding and respecting Assamese culture, traditions, and values.
6. **Language Skills:** Proficiency in Assamese, English, and other local languages.
7. **Public Speaking:** Confidently expressing oneself in front of an audience.
8. **Teamwork and Collaboration:** Effective collaboration and teamwork skills.
9. **Adaptability and Flexibility:** Ability to adapt to new situations and challenges.
10. **Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving:** Analyzing information, evaluating options, and finding solutions.
11. **Digital Literacy:** Familiarity with digital tools, social media, and online platforms.
12. **Respect and Empathy:** Showing respect and empathy towards others' opinions and beliefs.

13. **Clear and Concise Writing:** Effective writing skills for various purposes and audiences.
14. **Presentation Skills:** Confidently presenting ideas, projects, and information.
15. **Conflict Resolution:** Managing conflicts and disagreements in a constructive manner.

### **Barriers to Communication Skills of Youth in Assam**

Assam's strategic location makes it an important hub for trade, culture, and tourism in the region. Its borders with neighbouring countries (Bangladesh and Bhutan) and states (Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura, and West Bengal) facilitate the exchange of ideas, goods, and services, enriching the state's diversity and economy. Here are some common barriers to effective communication skills:

1. **Language Barriers:** Different languages, dialects, or jargon can create misunderstandings. Assam, a linguistically diverse state in northeastern India, has a total of 46 languages spoken across the region.
2. **Cultural Barriers:** Cultural differences can lead to misinterpretations and misunderstandings.
3. **Emotional Barriers:** Emotions like fear, anger, or stress can impede effective communication.
4. **Physical Barriers:** Noise, distance, or physical disabilities can hinder communication.
5. **Technological Barriers:** Poor internet connectivity, outdated technology, or technical issues can disrupt communication.
6. **Psychological Barriers:** Biases, assumptions, or preconceived notions can distort communication.
7. **Organizational Barriers:** Hierarchical structures, bureaucracy, or lack of clear roles can create communication silos.
8. **Personal Barriers:** Personal biases, lack of self-awareness, or inadequate communication skills can hinder effective communication.
9. **Environmental Barriers:** Distractions, interruptions, or uncomfortable environments can impede communication.
10. **Information Overload:** Too much information can lead to confusion, misinterpretation, or ignored messages.
11. **Lack of Feedback:** Insufficient or unclear feedback can lead to misunderstandings or miscommunication.
12. **Power Dynamics:** Imbalances in power or authority can create communication barriers.
13. **Trust Issues:** Lack of trust or credibility can hinder open and honest communication.
14. **Generational Barriers:** Different communication styles and preferences across generations can create misunderstandings.
15. **Learning Disabilities:** Undiagnosed or unsupported learning disabilities can create communication challenges.

Recognizing and addressing these barriers can help improve communication skills and ensure effective exchange of information.

### **Approaches to Enhance Communication Skills**

Effective communication is a continuous process. Here are some approaches to enhance communication skills:

1. **Active Listening:** Focus on fully understanding the speaker's message.
2. **Practice Mindfulness:** Be present and aware in communication situations.
3. **Use "I" Statements:** Express thoughts and feelings without blaming others.
4. **Ask Open-Ended Questions:** Encourage meaningful conversations.
5. **Clarify and Confirm:** Ensure understanding by summarizing and asking questions.
6. **Nonverbal Awareness:** Recognize and manage nonverbal cues like body language.
7. **Empathy and Perspective-Taking:** Understand and acknowledge others' feelings and viewpoints.
8. **Feedback and Reflection:** Give and receive constructive feedback, and reflect on communication experiences.
9. **Storytelling:** Share experiences and ideas through engaging narratives.
10. **Role-Playing:** Practice different communication scenarios in a safe environment.
11. **Mentorship and Coaching:** Work with experienced communicators to improve skills.
12. **Self-Recording:** Record yourself to analyze and improve communication style.
13. **Interpersonal Training:** Develop skills through workshops, training sessions, or classes.
14. **Join a Public Speaking Group:** Practice public speaking in a supportive environment.
15. **Seek Feedback from Others:** Ask trusted individuals for constructive feedback.
16. **Read and Watch Effective Communicators:** Observe and learn from skilled communicators.
17. **Practice in Low-Stakes Situations:** Develop skills in everyday conversations.
18. **Learn to Manage Conflict:** Develop skills to navigate disagreements and difficult conversations.
19. **Be Open-Minded and Adaptable:** Be willing to adjust communication style to suit different situations.
20. **Celebrate Successes and Learn from Failures:** Reflect on communication experiences and grow from them.

**Blended Communication Approach:** Blended communication refers to the combination of different communication modes, channels, or styles to achieve effective communication. It involves integrating multiple approaches to convey messages, build relationships, and facilitate understanding.

***Benefits of blended communication:***

1. Increased reach and engagement
2. Improved understanding and retention
3. Enhanced personalization and flexibility
4. Better suited for diverse audiences and purposes
5. More effective use of resources and time
6. Encourages feedback and interaction
7. Fosters a more inclusive and dynamic communication environment

***Examples of blended communication:***

1. Using both verbal and nonverbal cues in a presentation
2. Combining written reports with visual aids and oral summaries

3. Integrating face-to-face meetings with virtual collaboration tools
4. Blending formal and informal communication styles
5. Using social media to supplement traditional marketing channels
6. Combining synchronous and asynchronous communication methods
7. Incorporating storytelling with data-driven insights

By blending different communication approaches, individuals and organizations can create a more effective, engaging, and adaptable communication strategy.

### **Communication Skills through ICT**

ICT (Information and Communication Technology) can enhance communication skills in various ways:

1. **Video conferencing:** Enables remote communication and face-to-face interaction.
2. **Instant messaging:** Facilitates real-time text-based communication.
3. **Social media:** Enables communication and connection with others through various platforms.
4. **Online collaboration tools:** Facilitates team communication and collaboration.
5. **Virtual reality:** Enables immersive communication experiences.
6. **Accessibility tools:** Provides text-to-speech, speech-to-text, and other tools to aid communication.
7. **Language learning platforms:** Offers online resources to improve language skills.
8. **Communication analytics:** Provides insights into communication patterns and effectiveness.
9. **Online communities:** Enables connection and communication with others who share similar interests.
10. **Digital whiteboards:** Facilitates interactive and collaborative communication.
11. **Screen sharing:** Enables real-time sharing of content and ideas.
12. **Podcasting:** Enables audio-based communication and storytelling.
13. **Webinars:** Enables online presentations and communication.
14. **Online forums:** Facilitates discussion and communication on specific topics.
15. **Telepresence:** Enables remote communication with a sense of physical presence.

By leveraging ICT, individuals can enhance their communication skills, connect with others, and access a wide range of communication tools and resources.

### **Communication Skills through Books**

Highly recommended books on communication skills:

1. "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" by Stephen Covey
2. "How to Win Friends and Influence People" by Dale Carnegie
3. "Communication Skills" by Tony Alessandra
4. "The Art of Public Speaking" by Dale Carnegie
5. "Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion" by Robert Cialdini
6. "Verbal Judo: The Gentle Art of Persuasion" by George J. Thompson
7. "Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life" by Marshall B. Rosenberg
8. "Talk Like TED: The 9 Public Speaking Secrets of the World's Top Minds" by Carmine Gallo
9. "Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High" by Kerry Patterson
10. "Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most" by Douglas Stone

11. "The Power of Body Language" by Tonya Reiman
12. "People Skills: How to Assert Yourself, Listen to Others, and Resolve Conflicts" by Robert Bolton
13. "Effective Communication" by John Adair
14. "Communication: The Key to Effective Leadership" by Eric J. McCormack
15. "The Communication Book" by Mikael Krogerus and Roman Tschäppeler

These books offer valuable insights, practical tips, and expert advice to help you improve your communication skills in various contexts, from personal relationships to professional settings.

### **Communication Skills through AI**

AI can enhance communication skills in various ways:

1. **Language translation:** AI-powered translation tools can facilitate communication across languages.
2. **Speech recognition:** AI-powered speech recognition can aid individuals with speech impairments.
3. **Chatbots:** AI-powered chatbots can assist with customer service and support.
4. **Virtual assistants:** AI-powered virtual assistants can help individuals with communication disabilities or language barriers.
5. **Communication analytics:** AI can analyze communication patterns and provide insights to improve communication effectiveness.
6. **Personalized feedback:** AI can offer personalized feedback on communication style, tone, and language use.
7. **Language learning:** AI-powered language learning platforms can help improve communication skills in a new language.
8. **Accent reduction:** AI-powered tools can help reduce accents and improve pronunciation.
9. **Communication coaching:** AI-powered coaching can provide personalized guidance on communication skills.
10. **Accessibility tools:** AI-powered tools can provide real-time transcriptions, subtitles, and closed captions to aid communication.

By leveraging AI, individuals can enhance their communication skills, overcome language barriers, and connect with others more effectively.

### **Innovative Communication Skills Programmes for Assam's Youth**

Assam Skill Development Mission (ASDM) has embarked on various programs and initiatives to skill the youth, make them employable and promote entrepreneurship. In addition to implementing national schemes like PMKVY, at the state level, ASDM is setting up the Skills City and leveraging the latest technologies to create the desired impact (Dubey, 2018).



*Source: Skill Development Mission of Assam, 2015.*

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma inaugurated training centers to train 5750 youth under the Assam Skill Development Mission. He also launched the Skill Yatra to generate skill awareness in four districts through skill vans. Sarma introduced the Indigenous Skill Training by Gurus scheme to preserve and promote indigenous trades (Singh, 2023). Skill Yatra', a flagship programme initiated by Assam Skill Development Mission (ASDM), was launched in Lakhimpur district. Skill Yatra is a comprehensive programme initiated to enhance skills and potentialities of the youths in Assam (The Sentinel, 08 Feb 2024).

### ***Programmes and Initiatives:***

1. Advanced Skill Training Institute (ASTI)
2. Assam Placement Linked Skill Development Training Programme
3. Assam Skill Development Mission
4. Assam Skill University Project (ASUP)
5. Dakshata Samaroh
6. Digital Access to Knowledge & Skill Human Resources of Assam (DAKSHA)
7. India Skills – Assam
8. Karagar Se Karigar (Special Programme)
9. National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS)
10. National Occupational Standards (NOSs)
11. National Skill Development Council
12. National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF)
13. Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihood Mission (DAY-NULM)
14. North East Skill Centre
15. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 2.0 (PMKVY 2.0)
16. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
17. Recruit-Train-Deploy
18. Sector Skill Council



19. Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihoods Promotion (SANKALP)
20. Skill City
21. Skill Cum Job Fair
22. Skill Yatra
23. Skill, Employment & Entrepreneurship Department
24. State-Level Mega Skill Development Scheme
25. Swabalamban (Special Programme)

Innovative communication skills programs for Assam's youth:

1. **Youth Speak Assam:** A public speaking and debate programme to develop articulation and argumentation skills.
2. **Communication Champions:** A mentorship program pairing youth with experienced communicators for guidance and support.
3. **Digital Storytelling:** A workshop series teaching youth to create engaging stories and content for social media and digital platforms.
4. **Assam Youth Voices:** A podcasting programme enabling youth to share their thoughts, ideas, and experiences with a wider audience.
5. **Theatre for Communication:** Using drama and role-playing to build confidence and effective communication skills.
6. **Language Labs:** Interactive language learning centers focusing on English, Hindi, and local languages.
7. **Youth Media Academy:** A training programme in journalism, reporting, and media production.
8. **Debate and Discussion Forums:** Regular gatherings for youth to engage in constructive discussions and debates.
9. **Communication Skills Bootcamp:** An intensive program offering hands-on training in public speaking, presentation, and negotiation skills.
10. **Assam Youth Festival:** An annual event celebrating youth talents, creativity, and communication skills through performances, competitions, and exhibitions.

These innovative programmes can help Assam's youth develop essential communication skills, build confidence, and become effective communicators.

### **Advantages of Communication Skills of Youth in Assam**

Effective communication skills offer numerous advantages, including:

1. Clear expression of thoughts and ideas
2. Improved relationships and teamwork
3. Enhanced credibility and trust
4. Increased confidence and self-esteem
5. Better conflict resolution and negotiation
6. Effective problem-solving and decision-making
7. Improved public speaking and presentation skills
8. Enhanced leadership and management abilities
9. Increased productivity and efficiency
10. Competitive edge in career advancement
11. Stronger networking and interpersonal connections
12. Adaptability and flexibility in diverse situations

13. Empowered self-expression and assertiveness
14. Improved customer service and client relationships
15. Reduced misunderstandings and errors
16. Increased cultural awareness and sensitivity
17. Enhanced creativity and innovation
18. Better time management and prioritization
19. Improved adaptability to change and feedback
20. Increased overall personal and professional growth

Developing strong communication skills can benefit Assam's youth in all aspects of life, from personal relationships to professional success.

### **Issues and Challenges of Communication Skills of Youth in Assam**

Some specific issues and challenges of communication skills among youth in Assam include:

1. **Language barriers:** Proficiency in English, Hindi, and local languages like Assamese, Bodo, and Karbi.
2. **Cultural and traditional practices:** Balancing modern communication with traditional values and customs.
3. **Rural-urban divide:** Disparities in access to technology, education, and opportunities.
4. **Limited exposure and experience:** Fewer opportunities for public speaking, presentation, and networking.
5. **Shyness and hesitation:** Fear of speaking in public, expressing opinions, and asserting oneself.
6. **Lack of role models and mentors:** Limited guidance and support for developing communication skills.
7. **Socio-economic constraints:** Poverty, unemployment, and limited access to resources and technology.
8. **Tribal and ethnic identity:** Navigating diverse cultural identities and communication styles.
9. **Education system:** Rote learning and limited emphasis on communication skills in schools.
10. **Technology adoption:** Limited access to smartphones, internet, and digital platforms.
11. **Youth unemployment and disengagement:** Lack of motivation and purpose.
12. **Generational gaps:** Differences in communication styles between older and younger generations.
13. **Geographical barriers:** Remote locations and limited connectivity.
14. **Limited opportunities for creative expression:** Few platforms for showcasing talents and ideas.
15. **Mental health and well-being:** Stress, anxiety, and self-doubt affecting communication confidence.

Addressing these challenges can help empower Assam's youth to develop effective communication skills and reach their full potential.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Assam's youth, a burgeoning demographic, possess immense potential to contribute to the state's and nation's progress. However, realizing this potential is contingent upon the development of robust communication skills. This article underscored the critical role

of communication in various spheres of life, from personal relationships to professional endeavors.

While Assam has made strides in recognizing the importance of skill development, particularly through initiatives like the Assam Skill Development Mission, there's a clear need for a focused approach to communication skills. Addressing language barriers, cultural nuances, and limited exposure to communication opportunities are essential to bridge the gap.

By investing in communication skills training, mentorship, and platforms for youth expression, Assam can cultivate a generation of confident, articulate, and empathetic individuals. This, in turn, will foster a more inclusive, informed, and progressive society. It is imperative to create an environment where youth feel empowered to "speak up" and "shine bright," thereby harnessing their full potential for the betterment of themselves and their community. Ultimately, the development of strong communication skills among Assam's youth is not merely a goal but a strategic imperative for the state's overall growth and prosperity.

## References

- Dubey, M. (2018). ASDM's plans to accelerate skill development and enhance employability in Assam. *July 3, 2018*. Retrieved from <https://nationalskillsnetwork.in/asdm-skill-development-assam/>
- Singh, B. (2023). Assam launches a series of initiatives on skill development. *Sep 08, 2023*. Retrieved from <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/assam-launches-a-series-of-initiatives-on-skill-development/articleshow/103514484.cms>

## Online Resources

- <https://asdm.assam.gov.in/frontimpotentdata/skill-initiatives-in-the-state>
- <https://asdm.assam.gov.in/information-services/list-of-ongoing-schemes>
- <https://nationalskillsnetwork.in/asdm-skill-development-assam/>
- <https://skill.assam.gov.in/>
- <https://skill.assam.gov.in/portlets/skill-development-skill>
- <https://skillmission.assam.gov.in/about-us/program-initiatives>
- <https://statisticstimes.com/demographics/india/assam-population.php>