



Webinar on Mastering Functional English & Communication Skills

Date: 06th December 2025, Saturday

Organised By

**Directorate of Higher Secondary
Education (DHSE), Bhubaneswar**

In Collaboration with

UNICEF Odisha

Technical Partner



About the Partnership:

The **Directorate of Higher Secondary Education (DHSE)**, under the **School & Mass Education Department of the Government of Odisha**, in collaboration with **UNICEF Odisha** and the Identity Foundation Trust, conducts specialised webinars for higher secondary school students. These sessions are designed to equip students of Grades 11 and 12 with essential life skills, psychological resilience, and emotional competencies required for academic success, career advancement, and overall well-being. The initiative focuses on developing students' capacity to understand themselves, manage their emotions effectively, and build meaningful relationships.

About the Webinar Series:

The Directorate of Higher Secondary Education (DHSE), Government of Odisha, successfully organised the eleventh (11th) session of its webinar series on the theme **“Mastering Functional English & Communication Skills”**. This session marked a strategic shift from earlier sessions, with a clear focus on building students’ real-life language abilities for academic success, employability, and confident self-expression.

Students from Classes 11 and 12, along with faculty from higher secondary schools across Odisha, participated with high enthusiasm. They recognised that strengthening functional English and communication skills helped them express ideas clearly, engage better in classrooms, perform well in interviews, and interact effectively in professional and social settings—thereby improving academic outcomes, relationships with peers and teachers, and long-term career readiness.

No. of higher-secondary schools / colleges attended the webinar session	109		
No. of Class XI Boys students who attended the webinar session	2,090	7,254	13,202
No. of Class XI Girls students who attended the webinar session	5,164		
No. of Class XII Boys students who attended the webinar session	1,742	5,948	
No. of Class XII Girls students who attended the webinar session	4,206		
No. of male faculties who attended the webinar session	335	638	
No. of female faculties who attended the webinar session	303		

About the Resource Person:

Mr. Jasobant Narayan Singhlal, a renowned career coach and motivational speaker with over 18 years of experience, served as the resource person for the webinar. With proven expertise in implementing career guidance initiatives and life skills programmes, he has collaborated extensively with government bodies and development partners to bridge the critical gap between education and employability.

Welcome Note by the Resource Person:

Mr. Jasobant Narayan Singhlal warmly welcomed all participants, especially the students of Classes 11 and 12 from different regions of Odisha, along with their teachers and officials from the Directorate of Higher Secondary Education (DHSE). He shared, this



is the third year of the webinar series focused on career awareness, and this edition highlights a very important theme: **“Mastering Functional English and Communication Skills”**.

He cited that strong English and communication skills can provide students from diverse areas with access to higher education, jobs, and confidence in any setting. He encouraged students to actively respond to questions, share their doubts, and participate without hesitation. He also informed them In each session, different experts will guide participants on important skills and career paths, and they urged everyone to stay engaged and use this opportunity to learn and grow.

Why Functional English & Communication Skills!

Students in Classes 11 and 12 from Odia-medium backgrounds and rural or tribal regions often face serious challenges with spoken English, even though it is part of their school curriculum. This session therefore did not focus on teaching advanced grammar but on enabling students to use simple, correct English in real-life situations such as classroom discussions, conversations with teachers and friends, interviews, and online communication. The resource person, Mr. Singhlal,



emphasised that English should be viewed as a practical tool for opportunity and self-confidence, rather than as a marker of status or superiority. He consistently reassured participants that, with regular practice and the right mindset, every student—regardless of location or schooling background—can steadily improve their spoken English skills.

Why students struggle with English:

Upon Mr. Singhlal’s question to the students, “Why are you comfortable speaking Hindi or Odia but hesitate in English?”

Students responded candidly: “We use Hindi and Odia every day in movies, family conversations, and daily life. But English is only spoken in classrooms, not outside.”

They identified three key barriers: “Lack of practice, fear of making mistakes, and struggles with grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.”

Mr. Singhlal explained, “English feels difficult not because you are weak, but because you don’t use it as a living language like Odia or Hindi. In rural and tribal areas, where English speakers are rare, this

gap widens. That's why confidence drops, stage fear grows, and you avoid speaking English altogether."

Functional English: using language in real life:

Emphasising the kind of English needed to handle daily situations rather than literary or highly academic language, Mr. Singhlal demonstrated simple, ready-to-use sentences for classrooms and daily interactions, such as "Excuse me, sir. May I come in?" "May I ask a question?" "I did not understand. Can you please repeat?"



Mr. Singhlal encouraged students to use such sentences with teachers, friends, and family members to slowly replace silence and fear with practical usage. He stressed that fluency comes from frequent, low-pressure practice, not from memorising rules alone. The more students speak, even in small phrases, the more natural English becomes.

Three (3) Core Strategies for Daily Practice:

The resource person provided three simple, actionable strategies for rural students to make improvements realistic, without the need for coaching centres or paid courses.

1. Speak English in small portions throughout the day. Students were advised to start speaking short sentences in English as often as possible—describing their day, asking simple questions, or expressing basic needs. Even if they mix Odia/Hindi with English at first, the goal is to reduce fear and build comfort. Over time, the length and correctness of sentences will improve if they keep trying.
2. Find a practice partner He strongly recommended that each student identify at least one "English partner"—a friend or classmate willing to practise daily without judgement. With this partner, they can agree to speak only in English for certain periods, share new words, and correct each other gently. Practising with a peer makes the process less intimidating and more enjoyable, especially where there are no local spoken-English institutes.
3. Use technology wisely: AI tools, YouTube, and apps. The webinar showed how students can search "how to improve English speaking skills" on Google and listen to AI-generated audio tips to learn pronunciation and expressions. They were encouraged to watch English shows and short videos, listen to podcasts, and read aloud to train their ears and tongue together. Specific suggestions included using AI explanations, short-news apps like Inshorts to learn new words, and recording their own voice to track progress in pronunciation and confidence.

Building Vocabulary and Pronunciation:

Mr. Singhlal emphasised that vocabulary and pronunciation are muscles that grow with daily exercise. He advised students to:

- Learn around 10 new English words every day from newspapers, apps, or articles, and immediately use them in sentences so that they move from “passive vocabulary” (only understanding) to “active vocabulary” (confidently using).
- Read short articles on topics they enjoy—sports, movies, culture, or current affairs—and rewrite or narrate them in their own words.
- Practice reading aloud from stories or news pieces to improve voice clarity and rhythm, rather than reading silently all the time.

He illustrated with examples from cricket articles and movies, showing how students can borrow phrases like “a decade-long journey”, “built on mutual respect”, or “worth watching film” and adapt them into simple expressions for their own speaking and writing.



Mirror practice and self-talk:

One of the most powerful techniques the resource person shared was “mirror talk”. Students were told to stand in front of a mirror daily and speak for a few minutes in English about any topic—how their day went, their dreams, or a story they read. This helps reduce self-consciousness, improve body language, and make English feel more natural.

He connected this idea with a short motivational story about echo and “life as a mirror”, reminding students that the words they speak about themselves—“I can do it”, “I am improving”—shape their confidence. Speaking positive sentences in English in front of the mirror trains both language skills and mindset.

Overcoming fear and stage fright:

Addressing the common fear of speaking English in front of teachers or onstage, the resource person reassured students that fear is normal and shared three golden rules: practice at least 10 minutes daily, talk to the mirror, and copy and repeat good English from trusted sources. He even suggested ready-

made courtesy phrases that students can use when they feel nervous, such as “I am a little nervous; please bear with me” or “I am trying to improve my English; I hope you understand.”

He reminded them that many intelligent people across the world share similar fears, but those who take small daily steps eventually become confident speakers. The choice, he said, is between “working hard now and enjoying later” or “enjoying presently and struggling later.”

During the discussion, Mr. Singhlal also recommended the students use applications like “Inshort” to get short reads for vocabulary and fluency practice. He also demonstrated how to use the application and recommended that students utilise available English newspapers for reading practice.

Conclusion:

Through this webinar, Resource Person Mr. Jasobant Narayan Singhlal passionately underscored the vital role of functional English in academic success, interviews, and careers. He demystified mastery as achievable through daily practice, speaking in small chunks, finding partners, mirror talks, Google AI audio, and writing 150-word



articles, transforming fear into fluency within two months. “We all can speak English,” he motivated students from rural Odisha, sharing real dialogues like “I’m very hungry; let’s eat something” to build grammar and confidence naturally. By overcoming pronunciation hurdles, stage fright, and passive exposure to Hindi/Odia media, participants pledged to reduce anxiety, gain global readiness, and echo positive self-talk: “Life is a mirror—what you give, you receive.”

Attendance Details:

District Name	No. of Schools	Class XI		Class X		Faculties	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Male	Female
Angul	7	162	222	129	177	34	18
Balasore	6	87	196	50	116	10	7
Baragarh	5	129	218	142	215	22	15
Bhadrak	5	112	243	82	76	13	11
Bolangir	11	195	411	172	378	38	22
Cuttack	7	46	224	41	122	20	19
Deogarh	2	14	36	15	41	4	6
Dhenkanal	1	0	22	5	6	1	0
Gajapati	2	8	49	19	47	5	7
Ganjam	9	170	293	121	240	31	36
Jagatsinghpur	4	57	110	56	117	14	15
Jharsuguda	1	22	40	10	24	1	2
Kalahandi	1	17	24	17	13	3	2
Kandhamal	2	5	117	8	83	10	8



IDENTITY
FOUNDATION

unicef
unite for children

Keonjhar	5	94	270	107	256	13	16
Khurda	6	121	1230	96	1192	12	16
Koraput	3	21	218	45	121	6	4
Malkanagiri	2	110	131	110	146	8	8
Mayurbhanj	5	238	294	165	208	11	7
Nawarangpur	2	62	71	24	22	5	4
Nayagarh	3	27	119	15	91	8	16
Nuapada	2	30	62	14	30	10	1
Puri	1	71	88	17	25	7	16
Rayagada	2	54	58	52	66	8	3
Sambalpur	6	61	93	58	112	14	18
Sonepur	1	17	45	23	36	11	3
Sundargarh	8	160	280	149	246	16	23
Total	109	2090	5164	1742	4206	335	303
Classwise Total		7254			5948		638
Grand Total		13,202					

Photos from the Ground:



