

## Empowering Engineers Through Speaking Skills

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### Abstract

In a world which is characterized by technological aids and digital tools, the knowledge of English speaking plays a pivotal role. Every individual needs to communicate in some vernacular language of their choice to keep the ball rolling. Nonetheless, people require a universal language to meet the demands of global market and stand the challenges of the digital world. To fulfill this goal, speaking in common language like English is the need of the hour. The students in specific should open their eyes and examine the truth that speaking in English is the rudimentary aspect of their career growth. Be it an undergraduate, post graduate or professional course, every student must learn the art of speaking in English. A professional course like engineering demands much more of a student worthy of workplace competencies. From the perspective of placements and employment, communicating in English for engineering students is mandatory because MNC'S look for professional who are well versed and proficient in English communication. The addition of communication skills into the curriculum in all the engineering courses is done with the intention of improving the performance of budding engineers in all spheres of life. The focus on the syllabus is on the enhancement of four language skill- listening, speaking, reading and writing, but the key skill which is highlighted in engineering is speaking because through speaking engineering students can scale great heights and climb the ladder of success. So the article emphasizes the necessity for speaking in English for professionals to empower them.

**Keywords:** technological aids, knowledge, English language, speaking skills, engineering students, global market, employability, workplace competencies, speaking skills

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### Introduction

The high powered society where engineers intervene challenges them in all aspects as the society marches towards the 21st Century. Engineers engrossed in the execution of projects and processes, depending on the chosen field of study, rely on their speaking abilities. Speaking in the native/local tongue or language cannot fulfill the requirements of an engineering student and shower them success.

But learning to communicate in common language is the need of the hour. Hence mastering second /foreign language such as English is of prime significance.

The second language acquisition is a herculean task that requires many skills such as reading, listening, writing, speaking, grammar, and vocabulary. It is stated by a number of researchers that English is easy because we listen to English music, watch Hollywood movies and do other tasks pertaining to English. But when it comes to speaking, it is very different. Engineers placed in a multifaceted environment must gain an understanding of all aspects of the industry. There is an obligation to instill in the striving engineers extensive knowledge of speaking skills along with the technical knowledge.

### **Workplace Communication**

Workplace or the business world is seen as a bridge to reach out globally. As such, communication skills are placed at a higher scale by prospective employers in their pursuit for engineers. The traditional way of communicating has been the foundation of all ages, but now, engineers must learn to cope with the latest challenges of communication and maintaining a good job because of the heavy competition in the job industry. Young engineers are scared to express their ideas, opinions and abstain themselves from speaking due to language barriers. There are chances of long standing problems in the competitive world of engineering if the candidates are not capable of communicating even in the simplest English. Thus, being one of the essential elements of communication skills, preparing students with the necessary skills to speak effectively is crucial. Many engineering students lack proficiency in speaking. Furthermore, according to Nunan (1998):

"The desirable skills and attributes for engineers include the ability to communicate effectively, both verbally and in writing, to peers, the employers, client and the community; engineers should be bilingual" (p. 73).

The twenty first century is an epoch of swift changes. The urge to learn new things and acquire speaking skills will make the engineering students confident and give them a niche in the job market. So the channel of transmitting ideas for students takes place only through the speaking mode. The workplace or the business world is seen as a connection to reach out globally. So naturally engineers are expected

to aim higher and grope beyond their normal capacity to meet the demands of modernization and technology. As such, speaking skills are placed at a higher scale by prospective employers in their pursuit for engineers. Engineers must learn to use English by balancing with both the traditional way of speaking and implement the latest trends in technology. So one of the essential elements of communication particularly for engineering students is speaking skills to make them industry ready, 'fit for job and fit for life'.

The emphasis is put on students' fluency in communicating rather than on the accuracy of language which encourage students to be involved in the communication process. The intention is not just equipping students with technical skills, but the researchers believe that engineering students should be brought to light about human-related skills. This is where workplace communication will play an essential role in serving engineering students to build their inter-personal skills, which will undoubtedly be helpful in the future. Engineers need to build affinities with all types of people. They need to learn how to demonstrate interests in getting to know other people.

While exchanging ideas, engineers need to understand people who have different attitudes and perspectives due to their diverse backgrounds. Without good communication in their respective workplaces, chances are more for engineers to misunderstand wrong ideas that may be communicated and the overall peace of mind may be spoilt.

### **Speaking Skills for Professional Development Competence**

Speaking skills are obtained in order to interact with others. In a research conducted by Ferris & Tagg (1996) at various institutions and across academic disciplines, it has come to light that the two crucial problems faced by engineering students were students' inaptitude or unwillingness to participate in discussions and to respond to queries. Feedback from the faculty suggested that teachers need to provide content-based instruction and effective communication skills lessons in the class. Based on researchers' experience and observations, most would-be engineering graduates feel that communicating in English is indeed a challenge because most of them are diffident, shy and reserved. In order to prepare students to overcome their fear and be competent in communication, Nunan (1991) writes that:

success is measured in terms of the ability to carry  
out a conversation in the (target) language(150).

The analysis of Nunan's words expresses that one way of enhancing students speaking skills is make them communicate in their vernacular first to overcome their fear and timidity, and eventually make them speak in English. Execution of appropriate classroom activities by teachers of English will lead to speaking in the class. In this perspective another Linguist Swain Three Functions of Output in Second Language Learning. (1995) states:

we learn to speak by speaking

The classroom can become a place for learning to speak in English for engineers and the facilitators can implement activities which foster fun and frolic simultaneously a platform for interacting in English. More practice sessions can be introduced in the regular classes to ensure quick and proper learning on the part of the students. With more practice, there is ample scope for betterment in speaking abilities.

Engineers learn to plan and strategize their meetings, preparations and presentations as they work to minimize all mistakes and errors for the benefits of their organization. Communication for Professional Development is a prerequisite to students' academic, personal, and professional success in life. Speaking competencies can contribute to individual's social adjustment and participation in interpersonal relationships.

### **Speaking in English for Strengthening of Engineers' personality**

Communication skill is an essentially important element that would-be engineers need in order to survive the fast-growing globalized world. But communicating in the 'lingua franca' a common language like English has become the prime asset needed for budding engineers. Engineering students need to mingle with people of varied multiethnic and multilingual groups and to accomplish the end result; they need to speak in fluent English. Proficient English speaking skills also strengthens the personality of the engineering students and instills in them the ambition to scale greater heights. One should agree with the words of Alexander V. Sandoval who expressed in his essay, 'The Importance of English':

English is becoming the world's language  
of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Most of the world's  
population, about 70% speak English or

know it. And more than 80% of all stored information in the world is written in English or translated into it. ( [www.eagleforum.com](http://www.eagleforum.com)).

English speaking skill is a communicating weapon for engineering students as it promotes success and ensures a holistic personality. The person who speaks eloquent English will get along with people easily and will be understood much better.

### **What makes an Engineering Student outstanding than the others?**

The biggest field of study in the world today is engineering. The growing trend for professional course like Engineering is skilled/global Engineers who are well-versed in English communication and presentation skills. There is a need for imparting communication skills in engineering students as emphasized by industrialists, business people and MNCs in India and the world. Most of the Engineering theories taught in colleges are available only in English Language. Hence speaking in English is of utmost importance for engineering students and it requires competency of the usage of English language for different purposes and in different contexts and situations. The following are some of the reasons why budding professionals should learn to speak in English.

#### **1. To enhance Interpersonal Skills**

Communicating with people in English is the need of the hour. To have negotiations and carry out engineering business, engineering students should use English language to express their business ideas and thoughts. Very particularly when exchanges of information takes place between Indian and foreign countries, one should without doubt use only English language. By employing English language usage in the right manner, interpersonal skills between two speakers are strengthened and speaking in English enables one to have contacts with people across the globe.

#### **2. Career Growth**

Empowerment of engineers certainly takes place through the use of English language. During the process of seeking employment and growth in one's career, communicating in English is of crucial importance to accomplish mastery in English proficiency. Engineers working with a large group of people coordinate with their colleagues by speaking in English. A technical graduate becomes suitable for a job/employment only if his speaking and writing abilities are very eloquent. It has been discovered that

students who lack speaking skills in English are deprived of enormous opportunities and there are less chances of getting started in the career.

### **3. Avenues for Knowledge**

Being globally recognized as the language of science, engineering and technology, students of engineering should be able to master English language especially in the area of speaking fluently. All the data that is available in the books related to computers, science and technology is in English. So if the students do not habituate themselves to speak in English, then they may have to bear the brunt of being exposed very less to sharing knowledge or pathways open to knowledge in engineering.

### **4. Aesthetics of English Communication**

Like all other talents, speaking too is an art. But speaking in English is all the more bewildering and one can enjoy the aesthetics of English communication by being exposed to the culture of the world which no other language possesses. Speaking in English offers one the opportunities to perform surprising things. It gives you advantages of changing your life for the better. Speaking in English assures a spirit of friendship and oneness among blooming engineers and all engineering students should realize the beauty of English language and learn to speak in it to get social status.

### **5. Interactive Purpose**

English language is one of the greatest tools for communicating with people of all classes, creed, religion, sex or caste. Exchange of ideas between people of different linguistic backgrounds can take place in a systematic and meaningful manner only if students communicate in English language. Hence speaking in English for engineering students should be the major aspiration to use English for interactive purposes.

### **6. Elucidating Architecture and Diagrams**

The work culture of engineering studies deals with drawing, making sketches, working out designs and architecture. To attain this end, engineers should consistently mingle with their peers and use these tools for their work. To discuss the use of these equipments and also plan out different ideas, students should use the simplest form of communication in English. Speaking in English will express their ideas and working together is a sign of complete command over the work. Engineers, scientists and

technologists find themselves at ease to use English communication in a dynamic work atmosphere. It enables them to remain in touch with each other and fulfills their need to a great extent.

### **7. Creating a Unique Self Profile**

The power of English communication is so astonishing that it becomes a vital weapon for self-expression. Speaking in English helps the respective engineers to give a self-profile about themselves- who they are and what they can do. In conferences or meeting with clients or big officials, speaking in English helps engineers unveil their true efficiency and power of speech. By doing so, a unique and distinct self profile will be created. So speaking in English makes an engineer confident and be extraordinary among others in their career.

### **8. Technological Inventions**

The beauty of English is so great that today people are running after this global language which seems to be casting a magical spell in their personalities. As already discussed, books pertaining to professional courses and technological inventions are available only in English language. So to discover and make scientific inventions, engineering students should use only English as a medium of instruction both in the spoken and written forms. Software giants like Microsoft and Apple too have become the most successful performers throughout the world because they used only English as the language of communication.

### **9. Team Building:**

Engineering course/ engineering study are considered to be very challenging area in academics. Proper guidance and motivation to the members in an engineering group is mandatory. Team building can be done only by speaking in a common language. To retain the team spirit and unity among the members, sources pertaining to English language such as quotations, sayings and maxims can be employed to make communication meaningful and impressive. The attention of the listeners in the team can be drawn by speaking only in English. So speaking and understanding English has proved that it fosters team spirit and leadership qualities.

### **10. Research and Development:**

The advent of science and technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century brought about a great revolution. Information Technology brought a new order in the world thus causing apprehension for thousands of employees

across the world. Eventually IT organizations and institutions mushroomed and all the programming languages pertaining to IT were available only in English language. Thanks to the tremendous progress by science that the IT boom brought huge benefits of internet and web services available only in English. So the burden of speaking, writing and understanding English became essential for Engineers to earn their bread and settle down in good positions. The mighty language English today remains a language of dynamism and ensures great research and development even though revolution in IT technology has taken place.

### **Conclusion**

English language teaching and learning should certainly undergo a shift in the paradigm to suit the needs of the learners. Though a number of methodologies and approaches are implemented by facilitators in the classroom, yet there should be earnestness and passion among engineering graduates to learn English and consider it as a 'life skill'. The idea that English is a subject should be deleted from the minds of all people and view English as a 'skill subject'. Engineering students should inculcate the truth that wide exposure to English language speaking is very pivotal in all walks of life to fulfill their future needs.

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