

PROMOTING THE SPEAKING SKILL OF ENGINEERING STUDENTS AS AN EFFECTIVE ONE

(This was prepared on the analysis of engineering students speaking skill test)

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I. INTRODUCTION:

Making presentations and speeches is difficult for a large number of people. Shyness and a general lack of practice are among the biggest reasons for this. Becoming a good speaker is like many other skills--the more you do it, the easier it becomes and the more you improve. So it's important to give students as many opportunities to speak as possible.

These opportunities involve more than just generic oral book reports that require students to summarize a novel and give their opinions on the text. One suggestion is to have your students lead the class on occasion. Allow them to form groups, research a topic, and then present it to the class. You can even divide up sections of a textbook chapter this way. Also, have your students critique themselves as well as their group members on the quality of their presentations, focusing more on speaking skill than the content itself. Another suggestion is to give students opportunities to speak extemporaneously, or without a planned script. If you teach a math class, for instance, have different students share with the group how they solved a particular problem. Better yet, have them participate in a debate in which they're allowed to state their opinions on different matters. Students often love this! Here I have shared my experience with the engineering students.

II. MY EXPERIENCE:

"I teach English at an engineering college in Chennai.. I've been asked by the college management to teach communication skills. I find it difficult to make all students speak; some students are always passive. It discourages me a lot. I don't know whether the problem is with my approach or with my students. Please suggest some strategies that really work."

I have received a number of similar queried from teachers ever since I started contributing the column 'English Matters' to a newspaper in India .I was conducted a speaking skill test and also given a statistical analysis,

ASSESSMENT:

Names	Date and activity	Participation	Speaking confidently and with little hesitation (fluency)	Accurate use of grammar (accuracy)	Use of vocabulary	Pronunciation
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III. SAMPLE REPORT:

Above Mastery(16-20)						
S.NO	Names	Speaking confidently and fluently(5)	Accuracy (5)	Use of vocabulary (5)	Pronunciation (5)	Total (20)
1	Thanigai vel B	5	4	5	4	18
2	Yogesh R	4	5	4	4	17
3	Yogesh K	4	5	4	4	17
4	Shaik abbas	4	4	4	5	17
5	Prashant V J	4	4	5	4	17
6	Ugandran P	4	4	4	4	16

They can handle the situation confidently.

Average(BELOW--16)					
S.NO	Names	Speaking confidently and fluently(5)	Accuracy (5)	Use of vocabulary (5)	Pronunciation(5)
1	Yokesh M	3	4	4	3
2	Sachin raj C	3	4	4	3
3	Raguraman R	4	4	3	3
4	Velamuri amresh	4	3	3	3
5	Prabakaran P	3	3	3	4
6	Naveen S	3	4	3	3
7	Vinoth babu I	3	3	3	3
8	Venkatesh M	3	3	3	3
9	Venkata sunil R	3	3	3	3
10	Vasanthan K	3	3	3	3
11	Ramakrishnan T	3	3	3	3
12	Naveen K	3	3	3	3
13	Vignesh M	3	3	3	2
14	Vignesh K	3	3	3	2
15	Udhayakumar A	3	3	2	3
16	Spil berk M	3	2	3	3
17	Prasanth E D	3	3	3	2
18	Vignesh R	3	3	2	2
19	Sudhakar K	3	3	2	2
20	Seshadri D	3	3	2	2
21	Seelam vishnu vardhan reddy	3	3	2	2
22	Nishanth K	2	3	3	2

Reasons: They are struggling lot to speak in English .
They possess stage fear.
They are using broken sentences.

Below Average (BELOW 10)					
S.NO	Names	Speaking confidently and fluently(5)	Accuracy (5)	Use of vocabulary (5)	Pronunciation(5)
1	Vinoth kumar S	3	2	2	2
2	Vignesh K	2	2	2	3
3	Thulasinagendra G	2	3	2	2
4	Thirumoorthi V	2	3	2	2
5	Sai teja H R	2	2	2	2
6	Neelakandan J	2	2	2	1
7	Thennarasu ambedkar M	2	2	1	1

Reasons:

1. They need special attention to get fluency.
2. They are uttering broken sentences in English.
3. They too possess stage fear.
4. They are struggling a lot to speak in English.

For example, on the basis of above analysis, out of 35 students only 6 members are good at communication skill . Rest of them are to be motivated to get fluency.

How to make the unmotivated or semi-motivated students speak? As a teacher and trainer, I too have faced the problem of passivity; my colleagues at different institutes in India and abroad have experienced it. We have discussed the issue and tried various strategies that have proved to be effective.

I've devised a formula called "**MAP formula**" to make all students in a class speak without inhibition. MAP is the acronym for **M**otivate, **A**ctivate and **P**articipate.

1. MOTIVATE

According to Encarta dictionary, the word 'motivate' means 'to make somebody feel enthusiastic, interested and committed to something'. A good teacher is a person who can motivate his (her too) students. The following are some tips to motivate your students:

- Before you motivate others you should motivate yourself. You should be enthusiastic. Exhibit your passion for training your students.
- Be a role model to your students. If you want your students to speak well, you should be articulate. Inspire them.
- Establish a rapport with your students. You should attract your students towards you. The more the students like you, the better they learn and participate in activities.
- Be a friend but not a philosopher. That is, don't sound abstract when you speak to them. Give concrete examples.
- Always give a pat on the back. Use phrases such as "Well done. It is a good attempt." "I liked your argument very much." "It is a good point." "You have been very creative."
- Always sound positive. Instill confidence in your students. Tell them that it is easy to develop their speaking skills and make them believe your words. Make them believe that they have the potential to express themselves clearly in the target language.
- Use strategies that do not threaten them. It is very important to learn and practise a language in a non-threatening environment.

2. ACTIVATE

The word 'activate' here means to make someone active or to cause someone be productive. The statement "Ignite, fuel, sustain a fire in the mind of your student" that I came across in an article best summarizes the meaning of the word. You can activate your students in a number of ways:

- Enthuse and energize your students.
- Create a friendly and conducive environment for students to speak and discuss topics and issues. The layout of the classroom, for example, matters a lot.
The controversial nature of the topics listed above made all students express their views. Even students with low level of proficiency came forward to speak.
- Encourage free discussion. The objective is to make your students speak fluently. At a later stage, you can train them to be coherent, logical, etc.
- Tolerate their grammatical errors and correct them later. Are your students adults? If they are treat them as adults.
- Allow judicious use of certain words and expressions in the students' native language when they struggle to find the equivalents in English.
- Even if your students violate the rule of speaking English, do not get angry with them. Gently tell them not to use L1.
- Give more pair work and group work. Most students are comfortable being part of a small group.
- Add humour to your presentation and have fun with your students.
- Make students sit face to face during group discussion. Direct eye contact helps students develop their communication skills.

3. PARTICIPATE

The third principle is to 'participate'. It means to take part in an event or activity. It implies that the teacher should come down to the level of students. It is possible only if he undergoes a paradigm shift and has a positive attitude towards his students and adopts a result-producing approach.

Mingle with your students and participate in activities such as group discussions and role play.

- Empathize with learners who need your special attention.
- Know your students' strengths and weaknesses.

STUDENTS' ROLE

The MAP formula is not for the teacher alone. Students should also adopt the MAP formula for themselves. They should know how to motivate and activate themselves. After recharging themselves they should actively participate in tasks/activities that aim at promoting their communication skills.

David Martin in his book *Talk a lot* (2), published by EFL Press, Japan, says that he makes his students sign an agreement with him. Each student makes the following promises:

"I promise to try to speak as much as possible. I promise not to be afraid of making mistakes. I promise to use English to communicate. I promise to ask questions when I do not understand. I promise to try to have fun!"

Though strongly related, each of the four skills — listening, reading, writing and speaking — are distinct, and each contributes uniquely to an individual's overall communicative ability. When test scores are used to make consequential decisions, the use of

several sources of information yields better decisions than does a more selective use of information. Moreover, assessment is fairer to test takers if they are allowed to demonstrate their skills in multiple ways — with different tests, different methods and different question formats. Comprehensive testing also encourages broader and more generalizable teaching and learning of language skills by test takers. All of the reasons given here are consistent with the trend toward more comprehensive, integrated testing of language skills as seen in many prominent language testing programs. These activities make students more active in the learning process and at the same time make their learning more meaningful and fun for them. I have suggested few points to promote speaking skill.

HOW TO PROMOTE ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS

Find An English-Speaking Conversation Partner

First of all, it's important to find native speakers to practice with. Students who are living around many English speakers may be able to find informal opportunities to chat with neighbors and local business people. Joining a club or a volunteer organization can be a great way to get to know people informally. If that isn't an option, consider hiring a private tutor. A lot of students find and meet with tutors online via tools like Skype or Google Hangouts.

MAKE SURE TO LISTEN AS WELL AS SPEAK

When practicing with a native speaker, try to balance your listening and speaking. It's a good idea to prepare questions in advance so that the conversation will flow back and forth. If your conversation partner asks you a question and you answer at length, you can always turn the question back to your partner by asking, "What do you think?" or "What about you?"

RECORD YOUR CONVERSATION PRACTICE

Recording is a great way to get the maximum benefit from a conversation with a native speaker. When you listen again, you can evaluate your own pronunciation and notice areas where you need to improve. You can also review the content of the conversation, take notes on new vocabulary or misunderstandings, and prepare questions for the next meeting.

SURROUND YOURSELF WITH THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Another way to improve your English speaking skills is to immerse yourself in English as much as possible. Watch movies or TV in English, with subtitles if you need them, and watch the same programs over and over. Most people find that they understand more each time. Listening helps you become familiar with the rhythms and intonations of English. Once the sounds are familiar, try imitating them.

PRACTICE WITH MUSIC AND MOVIES

Listen to music in English and sing along. Music is one of the best tools for learning intonation pronunciation. Listening to and singing songs might also help you remember vocabulary and phrases (if the song is easy to understand), and it will help you learn to pronounce English rhythm in a more natural way. By unconsciously imitating the singer, you'll learn to pronounce phrases the way native speakers do. One good song for ESL or EFL students is "Tom's Diner" by Suzanne Vega because it uses simple language to describe everyday scenes and actions. Movies are a much better choice for learning English. You'll learn vocabulary, idioms, slang, pronunciation, and listening by watching movies. Be sure to use my movie technique when you do this!

READ ALOUD

Reading out loud is a great way to practice speaking when there are no conversation partners available. Reading aloud gives you a chance to focus on pronunciation and pacing without worrying about coming up with words. Make sure to practice with material that you can understand. Some students find videos online that have transcripts. Many TED talks, for example, include word-for-word transcripts of the talk. By reading aloud from a transcript, you can check your pronunciation by listening to how the speaker says something.

TALK TO YOURSELF

Saying your thoughts out loud or narrating your actions ("I am drinking coffee, and now I'm going to open my book") can be a very effective way to practice spoken English. By talking to yourself, you can become more fluent in translating your thoughts into spoken words. Practicing alone is also a low-pressure way to practice, since no one will hear your mistakes.

CONCLUSION:

According to the results obtained, we can notice that speaking competences are complex skills that need to be developed consciously. It can best be developed with practice in classroom through activities, which promote interaction between students. This study has tried to show that it is easier to obtain students' participation and motivation when the suggested materials are entertaining, original and surprising. The key is to motivate and change their negative attitude towards English giving students a chance to speak about interesting topics, which can result easy for them and for their level.

Finally, teaching listening and speaking skills can be very different depending on the methodology followed by each teacher but what it is really important is to develop during the English lessons to get students learn the second language entirely. Due to this, some suggestions have been offered, which can be put into practice during the lesson in order to motivate students to

participate in class and to do interaction activities to develop listening and speaking skills. These activities allow students to feel more comfortable and sure when they have to hold a conversation in English and they make the skills more effective in order to get a perfect acquisition of the second language, covering all the skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

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