
A Critical Study on English Speaking Challenges among the 21st Century Technocrats

Mr. Harish Derangula, Assistant Professor of English, Sri Venkateswara College of Engineering and Technology (A), Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh, India - 517127

Paper Received on 17-05-2023, Accepted on 19-06-2023,

Published on 21-06-23; DOI: 10.36993/ RJOE.2023.8.192

Abstract: Speaking is a common challenging aspect among the speakers of English as Second Language. India is a multilingual country and everyone has their own variety of dialect in their Mother Tongue. In a recent survey it was found that, 97 percent of Engineering students are not able express themselves in English with regard to Pronunciation and Fluency (Aspiring Minds survey). Many Research surveys state that learners of English as Second Language (ESL) desperately in need of improving their English-speaking skills. This Paper discusses the speaking challenges among the Engineering graduates (Non-native English-speakers) in India and how they are dominating the confidence levels of budding engineers. The researcher collected 311 random samples from present enrolled in B. Tech programme at Sri Venkateswara College of Engineering & Technology (A), Chittoor and Sree Vidyanikethan Engineering College (A), Tirupathi. Qualitative techniques were used to analyze the data and presented the results in the form of Pie Charts and Bar Charts.

Keywords: Importance of Speaking skills, Methodology, Analysis, Findings and Recommendations.

Introduction:

Speaking is one of the four major skills of a language to be developed as a means of effective communication in both first and second language learning contexts. To drive both Personal and Professional life smoothly one should have enough Speaking Skills. The engineering students who are learning English as a second language, should possess speaking competence and confidence in a professional environment to develop progressively. A significant proportion of individuals learning languages globally choose to study English with the aim of acquiring fluency in spoken communication as this the status of Global Language (Richards and Renandya's, 2002).

Despite numerous research endeavors dedicated to assisting learners in achieving proficiency in speaking, still students of English as a Second Language (ESL) encounter substantial challenges in mastering the skill. Moreover, it is widely acknowledged that speaking is regarded as the most intricate and arduous skill to acquire. (Hinkel, 2005), another cause is possibly that those studies still mainly dealt with the linguistic aspects of second language acquisition.

Not only research surveys but also corporate companies point out that the

present engineering graduates do not have enough job centric speaking skills. In a recent survey it was found that, 97 percent of Engineering students are not able express themselves in English with regard to Pronunciation and Fluency. Only 6.8% engineers show ability to speak or respond spontaneously (Aspiring Minds survey-Aug 08, 2015). Technical graduates should be equipped with a variety of technical skills along with Speaking skills which help them to be recruited at the time interviews and even to progress in their professional and personal lives.

Objectives of the research:

- a) To study the awareness about need of Speaking skills & their importance among engineering graduates of Sri Venkateswara College of Engineering & Technology (A), Chittoor, and Sree Vidyanikethan Engineering College (A), Tirupathi Andhra Pradesh (multi-cultural educational institutions).
- b) To find and analyze the challenges faced by the Engineering graduates in enhancing their Speaking skills.
- c) To analyze scope of the curriculum to develop the Speaking skills.
- d) To analyze the contributions/support to develop the Speaking skills of the students from the institutions and students themselves.
- e) To recommend suitable solutions for the better improvement of Speaking skills.

Review of literature:

"lingua franca" refers to a language which is adopted as a universal mode of communication among speakers of different native languages. There is no denying that English has become the predominant global language, as evidenced by its extensive (85%) use in media, signage, and international communication (Crystal, David, 2003).

English may not be the primary language used in agricultural practices, business transactions, or workshops. However, it holds significant importance in Agricultural Universities, Business Management courses, and Engineering colleges where it serves as the medium of instruction/ communication. (Krishnaswamy, Verma, and Nagarajan, 1992). So, the people wanted to survive in the technology driven world got need to speak in English.

Learning a language is an art. While dealing with a language Reading and Listening are considered as Receptive Skills on the other hand Writing and Speaking are considered as Productive Skills. Out of all the four Language Skills (LSRW) Speaking has its own importance (Boonkit, 2010).

It was explored that most of the schools and colleges given importance to answering to questions from a prescribed syllabus and reading the passage for marks sake. Gradually students developed psychologically negative attitude towards English speaking as they were not taken care by the teachers, no scope in syllabus and no encouragement from the institutions. As a

result, students could not find an appropriate environment conducive for developing Speaking skills (Sheeba, Karthikeyan, 2018).

Research Methodology:

The study was descriptive in nature. After going through the relevant review of literature, a standard questionnaire was developed and submitted to a research expert (pilot study) to confirm the validity of it. The data for the research, samples were collected through the questionnaire from the two engineering colleges.

Questionnaires and Data Analysis:

To get the responses (opinions and perceptions) for the Questionnaires Likert scale (rating system), has been used for collecting the data. Students were given chance to choose from a range of possible responses to a specific question or statement.

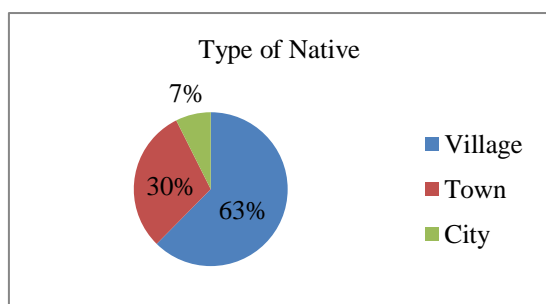


Figure - 1

The responses “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Neutral,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly Disagree” included.

Results and Data Analysis:

Qualitative methods were employed to gain insights into the significance and difficulties associated with Speaking skills within the curriculum. The term Qualitative indicates a focus on the characteristics of entities, on processes and meanings that are not subjected to experimental examination or measurement.

1. To know the basic information about the students:

The researcher experienced mother tongue influence among the students of the mentioned institutions personally while communicating with. So, the following responses were collected for the questionnaires to understand the basic information about the learners.

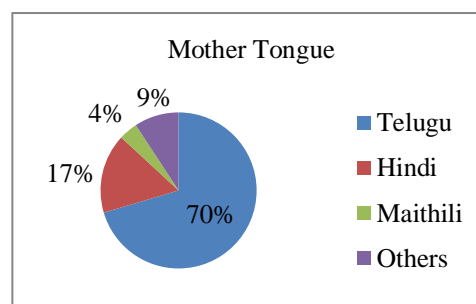


Figure - 2

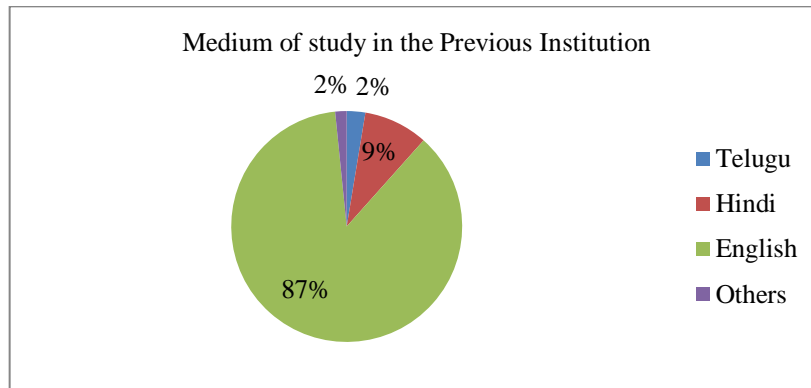


Figure - 3

In response to the three questionnaires, 63% of the students belong to rural background, 70% of the students' mother tongue is Telugu even then 87 % of them opted English as medium of study in their previous institution.

2. To check the awareness of the students about Speaking skills:

The following two questions were prepared to understand the students' perception and awareness on Speaking skills which they need for their career.

1. Are you aware that speaking skills are essential for any language?
2. Are you aware that English speaking skills play vital role in achieving your endeavors?

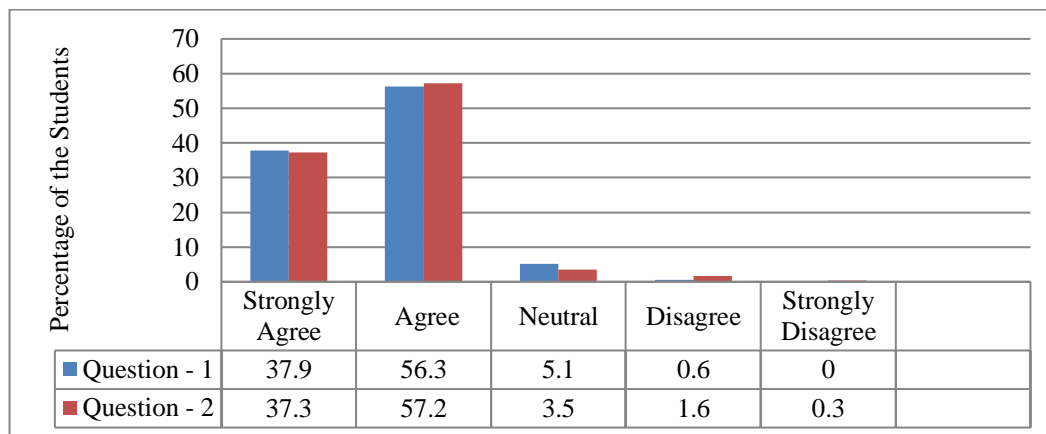


Figure – 4

The above diagram clearly portrays that 94.2% of the students are aware that Speaking skills are Essential for any Language and interestingly 94.5% of the

students are aware that English Speaking skills play vital role in achieving their endeavors.

3. On the learning environment:

The learning environment should be Activity Based Learning (ABL) to improve ones' Speaking skills. The following question were Prepared to know whether students are getting enough opportunities to enhance their Professional (Speaking) skills.

1. Does your Curriculum and Teachers give you scope to improve your Speaking skills?
2. Does your college environment give you opportunity to speak and support you to improve your Speaking skills?
3. How often do you engage in public speaking activities (Elocution, Presentations, Debates, Group Discussions etc.,) in your college?

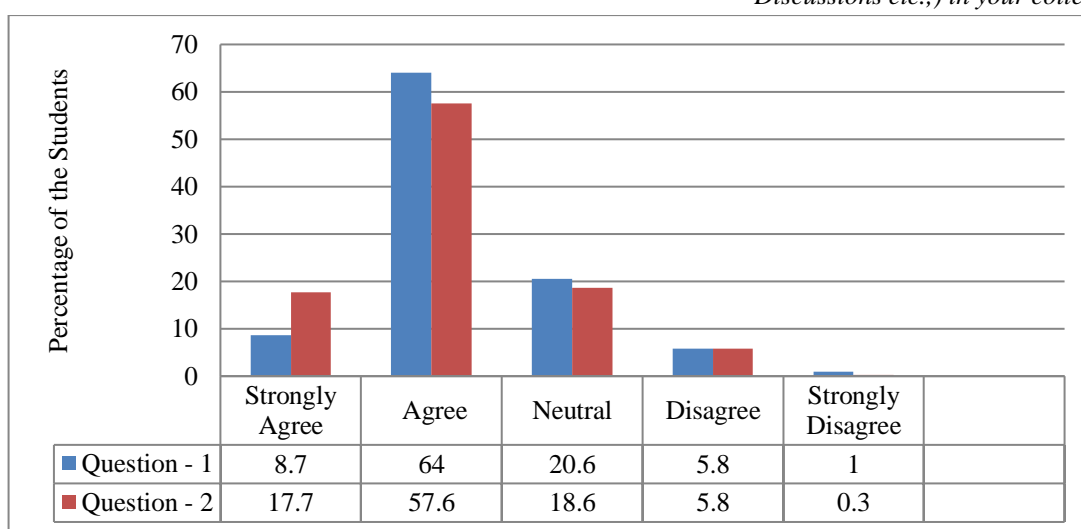


Figure – 5

The above chart clearly picturizes 74.7% of the students responded that their Curriculum and Teachers give them scope to improve their Speaking skills, which means still this section may need some improvements. Whereas for the second question 75.3% of the students responded that their college environment gives them opportunity to speak and support them to improve their Speaking skills if needed.

4. To know the students' involvement and level of their speaking standards

The following were prepared to know the involvement of the students and how do they feel when they engage in the public speaking activities.

1. How often do you engage in public speaking activities (Elocution, Presentations, Debates, Group Discussion etc.,) in your college?
2. How do you feel before speaking in front of people?

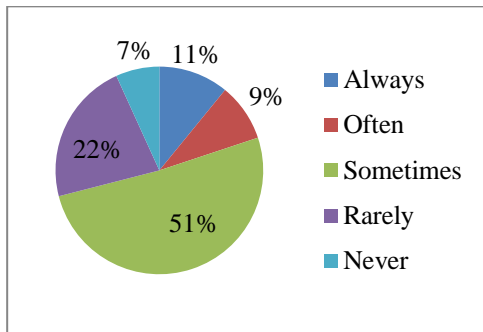


Figure – 6

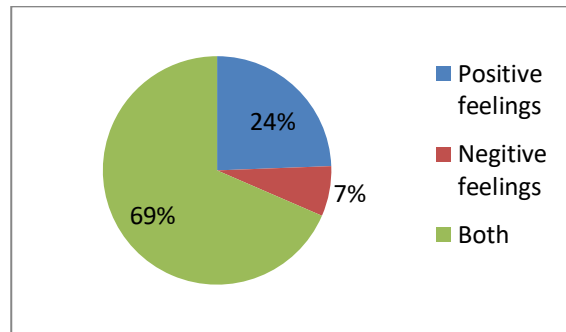


Figure – 7

Even though the researcher found 74.7% of the students who agreed for Question - 1 and 75.3% of the students responded who agreed for Question - 2 in the previous (Figure – 5) chart, surprisingly only 20% of the students are utilizing the opportunities. Probably they might be feeling inferior to speak as shown in the Figure – 7. In the figure – 7 Positive feelings refer to Happy, Enthusiasm, Motivated, ready to improve themselves, Confident etc., whereas Negative feelings refer to Speaking

Anxiety, Fear, Nervous, Lack of Confidence, Inferiority, Demotivation, Tensed etc., Only 24% of the students feel confident when they get opportunity to speak but unfortunately the rest of 76% of the students have the problem of inferiority.

5. To know the difficulties faced by the students:

The following was prepared to know what are the exact problems faced by the students to speak Infront of the people.

1. *In English what aspects of speaking do you find most difficult?*

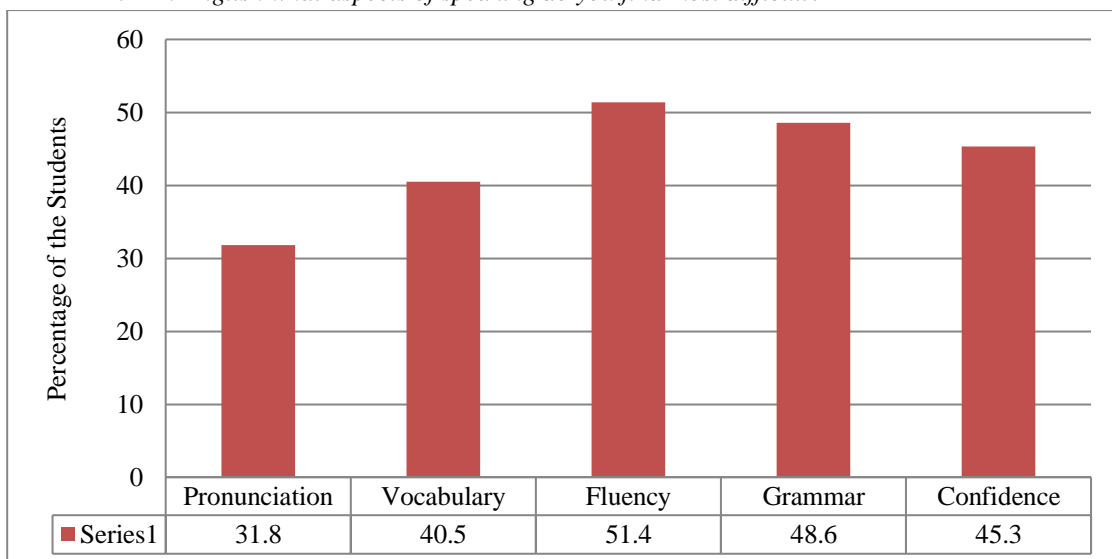


Figure – 8

All the students responded for the above questionnaire genuinely and they selected multiple areas of language where they feel difficult. The responses were shown in the above (Figure – 8) chart very accurately. Except Pronunciation, approximately almost all the students have the same problems in all the areas of the English language to speak.

6. To know the Interest of the student in Speaking workshops:

The present questionnaire was prepared to the interest of the students whether the students are willing to participate in any speaking workshops where they can improve their Professional (Speaking) skills.

1. *Would you be interested in participating in training sessions to improve your English-Speaking skills?*

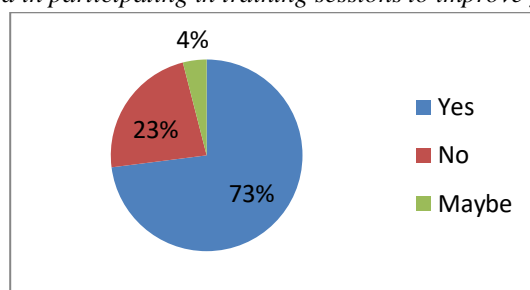


Figure – 9

The above chart depicts that 77% of the students are willing to participate in any speaking workshops where they can improve their Professional (Speaking) skills.

7. To know the personal opinions of the students:

The following questionnaire was prepared to know the problems and expected solutions from the students. No changes (even grammatical and typos) were made in the responses which were collected.

1. *Is there anything would you like to mention (Problems or Expectations)?*

- Every week to conduct speaking program.
- English speaking is practically easier than three theoretically.

- We need more practice sessions.
- Kindly conduct listening writing and reading sessions also in the course
- How can I improve myself to speak in English fluently?
- I want learn vocabulary and pronunciation.
- I am not able to speak with other in English because of fear of mistakes.
- Teachers tell you to come on to the stage. but students due to fear they are not going to stage. I feel if they call specifically every person I think it is better.
- In first year only we have training class but now not there training class to us we want more training classes to improve English speaking skills.

- Main chahata hu ki every week seminar hona chahiye english speaking ka aur communication skill ka....
- I like to speak English language continuously.
- Communication skills course wants to provide please madam/sirs

Findings from the Data analysis:

The analysis of the data obtained through the questionnaire delivers the following results

- It is crystal clear that all most all the students know the importance of the Speaking skills and where they exactly lag behind.
- The students have positive attitude to learn and to improve themselves for their professional development.
- Most of the students that they don't get enough opportunities for strengthening their skills.
- Students are expecting Activity Based Learning in their curriculum, practice sessions and special training programs.
- In fact, students are expecting individual attention from their teachers for faster and accurate development.

Suggestions/Recommendations:

- As 70% of the students belong to rural background students they may have many inhibitions related to language and poor academic practices in their previous institutions. Students should be

offered with number of resources and chances to learn.

- Even the curriculum has scope to provide language skills individual care should be given upon each student.
- Merely having Activity Based Learning in the curriculum does not help the students to develop their language skills. A teacher should assess whether the students are really growing.
- It's important to understand that every language has its own set of usage rules, which should be taken into account when communicating in a specific social setting. (Kang Shumin, 2002). So, it is recommended that, students can improve their accuracy in using the English language by imitating the native speakers.
- Students already know the need of Speaking skills and where they exactly lag behind. Now the next step is to motivate/encourage them immensely and guide properly to overcome their speaking inhibitions.
- It was found and recommended that, frequent interaction (horse-sense ridding) with the audience can reduce shy among the non-native speakers (J. Berg Esenwein, 2017).
- Interaction and meaningful communicative activities, such as JAM sessions and interactive tasks (Elocution, Presentations, Debates, Group Discussions etc.,) can help to

improve engineering graduates' speaking abilities.

- Learners should be provided with relevant Task Based Learning activities to acquire English speaking skills (Boonkit, 2010).
- The learning environment should be more pleasant where no discriminations among the students who come from different cultures and backgrounds.
- Students should prefer English language as medium of communication with their peers instead of using their mother tongue in spoken and translation of their mother tongue into app language in written.
- Students should spend at least 30 minutes per day to listen the speeches of native speakers which can help them in improve their Accent, Pronunciation, Fluency and even Vocabulary.
- Acquiring language skills takes much time and it can be 'acquired' gradually over a period of time. So, the learners are advised to put efforts in a systematic approach for a better and remarkable development.

Conclusion:

Speaking skills play vital role in the professional environment. Engineering institutions should go beyond the empty claims and should come up with result-oriented initiations to help the learners. Updating outdated curriculum, offering

more practical sessions and industrial exposure can help engineering students to develop their professional (speaking) skills. So, the professional colleges and universities can incorporate Activity Based Learning tasks in both teaching and training in the course and prepare the students to equip to be employable. Simultaneously, the students must be proactive and pay special interest by actively seeking opportunities to inculcate and improve their speaking skills. By combining institutional support with individual effort, students can maximize their potential and thrive in the professional world.

References:

- Richards, Jack Croft, Jack C. Richards, and Willy A. Renandya, eds. *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice*. Cambridge university press, 2002.
- Eskey, David E. "Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning." (2005).
<http://www.hindustantimes.com/education/97-engineering-graduates-cannot-speak-english-fluently-survey/story-GQEkTYwI4AX5zc7oeXkz1M.html>
- Crystal, David. *English as a global language*. Cambridge university press, 2003.
- Krishnaswamy, N., and S. K. Verma. "M. Nagrajan-Modern Applied Linguistics." (1992).
- Boonkit, Kamonpan. "Enhancing the development of speaking skills for non-native speakers of English." *Procedia-*

social and behavioral sciences 2.2 (2010): 1305-1309.

Sheeba, W. T., and J. Karthikeyan. "Factors that psychologically impede second language learners from speaking english - a perspective study among civil engineering students." *International Journal of Civil Engineering and Technology* 9.8 (2018): 1233-1237.

Shumin, Kang. "Factors to consider:

Developing adult EFL students' speaking abilities." *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice* 12.35 (2002): 204-211.

Carnegie, Dale, and J. Berg Esenwein. *The art of public speaking*. Courier Dover Publications, 2017.

How to cite this article?

Mr. Harish Derangula " A Critical Study on English Speaking Challenges among the 21stCentury Technocrats" *Research Journal Of English (RJOE)*8(2), PP:182-192-2023, DOI:10.36993/RJOE.2023.8.2.192