

Enhancing English Speaking Skills: A Survey-Based Study Of Cse Diploma Students

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates the perspectives of approximately 249 computer Science and Engineering diploma students at Parul University concerning their English-speaking skills and practices in the classrooms. A structured questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data on frequency of the use of English language, comfort levels, participation in speaking activity, Feedback mechanisms, and perceived challenges. The findings reveal that nearly 36.5 % of the students reported neutral comfort level in speaking English, and most indicated limited classroom speaking practice. Students showed more interest inclusive and learning activities. The data also reveals that the students showed a strong preference for interactive activities such as group discussions and role play in the classroom. The study recommends integrating a dedicated, learner-centered spoken English model into the curriculum to enhance communicative competence among technical students.

Keywords: English Speaking Skills, CSE Diploma Students, Classroom Activities, Communication Challenges, ELT Practices, Learner Centered Approaches

INTRODUCTION:

The Need for English Speaking Skills in Engineering Education

The Need for English Speaking Skills in Engineering Education In today's global academic and professional settings, English has become the common language in many fields, including science, technology, and engineering. It serves as the main language of instruction in many higher education institutions. English also dominates communication in multinational companies, research collaborations, international conferences, and online content (Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006). For engineering graduates in India, proficiency in English, especially speaking skills, is crucial not only for academic success but also for improving job prospects, advancing careers, and increasing global mobility.

Diploma-level engineering students, particularly those who study in regional languages or come from non-English medium schools, often face serious challenges in oral communication. These challenges include limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation, lack of confidence, and not enough opportunities for real-time interaction in English (Nunan, 2003). This gap in communication can create barriers for these students as they try to integrate into academic and workplace environments that primarily use English.

Gaps in Existing Curriculum and Classroom Practices

In Indian technical education, there is a strong focus on reading and writing skills. However, speaking skills often get overlooked. This neglect is due to strict curricula, test-focused teaching methods, and large class sizes that restrict individual participation (Richards & Rodgers,

2014). Kumaravadivelu (2006) argues that effective language teaching should move past traditional methods and adopt approaches that consider learners' social and cultural backgrounds and specific needs.

This approach is especially important for technical learners. They need practical, workplace-oriented communication skills instead of just literary or academic proficiency. Previous studies have shown a gap between what students need and what they are taught. For example, students often want more interactive and communicative activities. However, instructors tend to stick with rote grammar instruction or scripted dialogues that do not engage students in a meaningful way (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Graddol, 2006). Furthermore, not enough teacher feedback and a lack of individualized support make students less willing to participate in speaking activities in class.

Importance of Learner-Centered Approaches

Recent research in English Language Teaching (ELT) highlights the importance of learner-centered instruction. This approach focuses on making teaching choices based on students' needs, interests, and preferences (Nunan, 2003). It involves using interactive speaking activities such as role plays, group discussions, presentations, and interviews that resemble real-life communication situations. Learner-centered methods also promote autonomy, engagement, and confidence. These are key factors that help develop spoken language skills.

Graddol (2006) points out that technology is influencing education. It is important to mix traditional classroom practices with digital tools, such as mobile apps and online speaking platforms. These resources help learners practice pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency outside

of the classroom. This offers them more exposure and flexibility in their language learning journey.

The Institutional Context and Rationale

This study examines diploma students in Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) at Parul University in Gujarat. These students are in a professional technical program. They are expected to gain both specific knowledge in their field and the communication skills needed for effective presentations, teamwork, and leadership in technical and non-technical environments.

Although these students understand that English is vital for professional success, many express low confidence in their speaking skills and have limited experience with organized speaking activities. This gap between their awareness of English's importance and their actual practice shows the need for research into their learning needs, preferences, and experiences in the classroom.

Purpose of the Study

The main goal of this research is to evaluate the current oral communication situation for Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) diploma students. Specifically, the study aims to:

- Measure how comfortable students feel and how confident they are in their English speaking skills.
- Review the frequency and variety of communication activities included in the English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum.
- Look at how effective the current feedback methods and teaching support are.
- Understand student views about the importance of English speaking skills for their future careers and studies.
- Create teaching recommendations based on a thorough analysis of student needs.
- The findings of this study provide valuable information for curriculum designers and school officials. They emphasize the need to move towards student-focused, technical speaking courses. By addressing these issues, technical schools can better prepare engineering students with the communication skills they need to succeed in the global job market.

Objectives of the Study

1. To evaluate how comfortable CSE diploma students feel speaking English.
2. To investigate how often and what types of speaking activities are included in their English classes.
3. To assess the feedback methods provided by instructors.
4. To explore students' views on the importance of speaking skills for their careers.
5. To suggest improvements and changes in course design to improve speaking proficiency.

Research Methodology

The research took place at Parul University in Vadodara, Gujarat. It involved a purposive sample of 249 diploma-
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level students from the Department of Computer Science and Engineering (CSE). This group was chosen because of the strong professional demand for English skills in the global IT and software development fields

Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire was the main tool for data collection. It included a combination of closed-ended Likert-scale questions for statistical analysis and open-ended questions for qualitative insights. The survey focused on six key themes:

Frequency of Oral Engagement: Measuring active English use within the classroom.

Affective Factors: Assessing self-reported comfort levels and communication confidence.

Instructional Involvement: Evaluating participation rates in various speaking activities.

Feedback Loops: Reviewing the consistency and impact of instructor feedback.

Linguistic Barriers: Identifying specific challenges, including grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

Learner Preferences: Collecting student suggestions for changes in the curriculum and instruction.

Data Analysis

The researchers analyzed the collected data using descriptive statistics to find frequencies and percentages. This helped them establish behavior patterns and identify the biggest challenges faced by students.

Findings and Discussion

Comfort and Frequency of Speaking English

The data analysis shows that most CSE diploma students use English communication only occasionally in classroom interactions. Figure 1 illustrates that most students reported speaking English 'Sometimes.' This highlights a significant gap between theoretical language exposure and actual speaking practice.

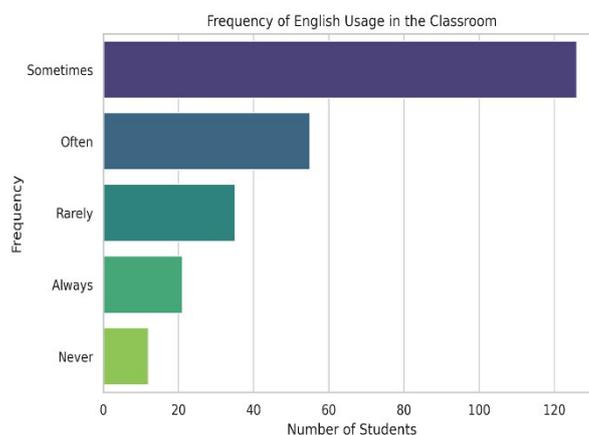


Figure 1: Frequency of English Usage in the Classroom

When looking at self-reported comfort levels, the data shows a more detailed distribution. While 40.2% (100 students) said they felt 'Comfortable,' a significant 36.5%

(91 students) held a 'Neutral' position, as shown in Figure

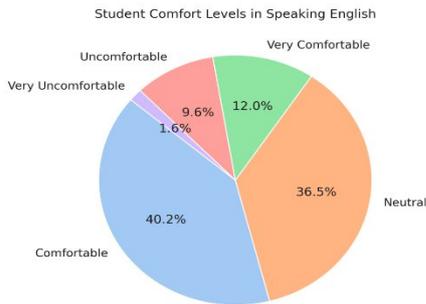


Figure 2: Student Comfort Levels in Speaking English

This high percentage of neutrality is an important finding. It points to a large group of learners who have basic language skills but lack the confidence to communicate spontaneously. These results show that while students recognize the academic value of English, they are not yet fully fluent in using it actively. This highlights the need for supportive environments that encourage students to speak more often without the fear of making mistakes.

Challenging Areas in English Speaking

The survey aimed to find out the specific language and psychological challenges that hinder effective communication among technical students. As shown in Figure 3, the data reveals that Grammar (94 mentions) and Confidence (84 mentions) are the most significant obstacles identified by the respondents.

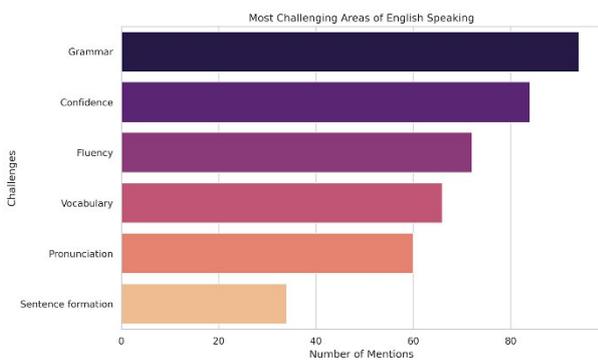


Figure 3: Most Challenging Areas of English Speaking

These findings point to two main challenges: a struggle with the rules of the language and a fear of judgment. While traditional teaching often emphasizes vocabulary and pronunciation, the repeated mention of 'Confidence' as a challenge shows that many students experience a strong 'affective filter' (Krashen, 1982). Following this, Fluency (72 mentions) and Vocabulary (66 mentions) were also identified as major difficulties.

Perceived Importance and Future Career

Students' motivation plays a crucial role in learning a language. The survey results, shown in Figure 4, reveal a

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clear agreement on the need for English in professional settings.

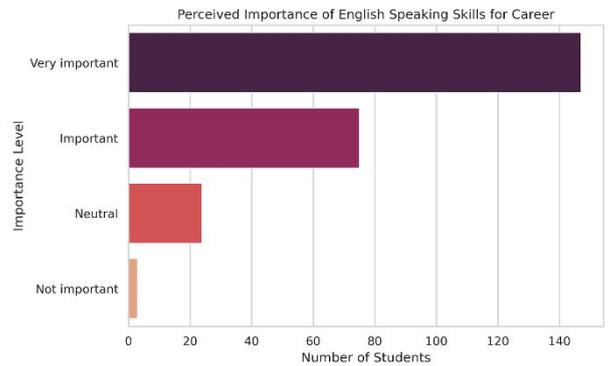


Figure 4: Perceived Importance of English Speaking Skills for Career

Nearly all respondents rated English speaking skills as either 'Very Important' or 'Important' for their future careers in the Computer Science and Engineering field. This strong motivation supports the need for curriculum changes. However, the previous sections indicate that this motivation does not always lead to active participation in class. This shows a gap between student goals and current classroom opportunities.

Teacher Feedback and Classroom Opportunities

The instructor's role is crucial in giving the feedback needed for fluency. As shown in Figure 5, although many students receive feedback, a significant number report that it is inconsistent.

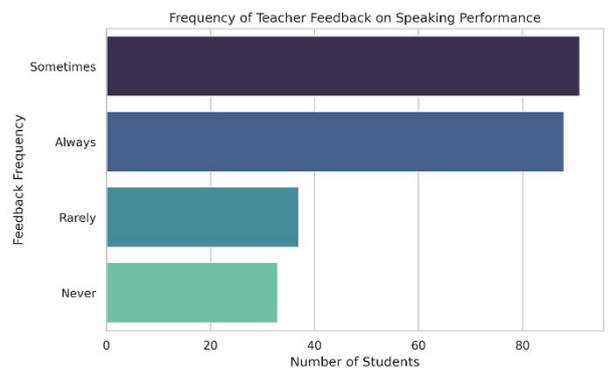


Figure 5: Frequency of Teacher Feedback on Speaking Performance

Furthermore, as shown in Figure 6, there is a huge demand for change. 73.1% of students said they want a separate module that focuses on speaking skills. This suggests that the current integrated curriculum may not be giving diploma students the specific "output" time they need to feel ready for jobs.

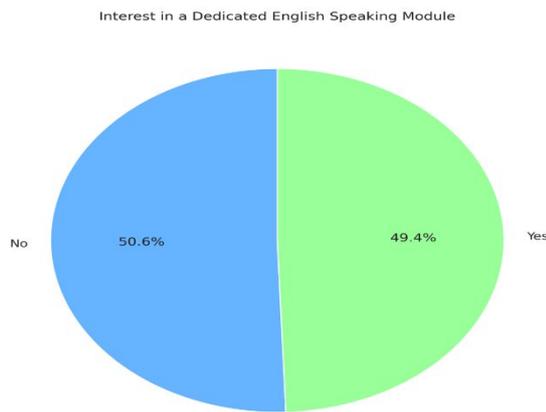


Figure 6: Student Interest in a Dedicated English Speaking Module

Students' Perception of the Importance of English Speaking Skills

When surveyed about the importance of English speaking skills, most students rated them as either "Important" or "Very Important" for their academic and professional futures. They noted that being good at spoken English is essential for job interviews, workplace communication, teamwork, and opportunities abroad. Additionally, students acknowledged that strong English skills can boost self-esteem and open up more career options both at home and overseas. This strong belief shows that students recognize the value of English for personal and career growth. It highlights the need to add more speaking-focused modules to the English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum.

Analysis of Challenges in Developing Speaking Skills

The survey results show that CSE diploma students struggle to develop oral proficiency due to a mix of language and psychological factors. One major issue is their feeling of having weak grammar and vocabulary. Students say this leads to a lot of hesitation during spontaneous speaking. Richards (2008) points out that a limited vocabulary often stops learners from expressing complicated technical ideas, which lowers their overall fluency. Additionally, pronunciation is a concern; many students find it hard to pronounce words correctly because of their mother tongue. This can create a fear of miscommunication (Gilakjani, 2012).

Apart from these language issues, students mention a lack of confidence, which suggests a high affective filter. In the classroom, the fear of being judged by classmates or teachers often makes it hard to participate. This issue is made worse by the few chances to practice, since technical programs usually focus more on written tests than on speaking. As Tuan and Mai (2015) note, large class sizes and limited time often stop instructors from giving students the personal attention they need to practice their speaking skills regularly.

Proposed Strategies for Improvement

Based on the data and student feedback, several practical strategies emerge for improving the English-speaking environment. Students want more frequent, structured

speaking sessions that go beyond traditional lectures. One notable trend in the feedback was the interest in using mobile-assisted language learning tools. Applications like Duolingo or Google's Read Along provide a low-stakes environment for students to practice pronunciation and vocabulary on their own (Godwin-Jones, 2011).

To encourage natural conversation, the researchers suggest increasing the use of interactive, task-based activities such as simulations and technical debates. Nunan (2004) highlights that meaningful language use is essential for helping students move from passive knowledge to active fluency. Additionally, the strong demand for a dedicated speaking-focused module indicates that the university should think about redesigning the curriculum to treat oral communication as an important skill rather than a secondary requirement. Setting up peer-communication circles can also create a supportive, informal space where students feel safe to make mistakes and build confidence through regular practice (Brown, 2001).

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study point out several areas for improvement focused on improving the English-speaking skills of engineering students. These suggestions come from the challenges students face, their feedback, and their ideas. They are also backed by existing research in English Language Teaching (ELT) and second language acquisition.

Integration of a Need-Based Spoken English Module

One of the most important recommendations is to add a dedicated spoken English module to the Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) curriculum. This module should meet the specific communication needs of engineering students, such as technical presentations, interviews, and project discussions. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) highlight that an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach, which centers on the real-life language needs of learners, helps them acquire language more effectively. Creating a separate speaking module would offer targeted instruction, consistent practice, and improved assessment of oral communication skills.

Peer-to-Peer Speaking and Collaborative Projects

Encouraging students to interact with each other and including group projects in classroom instruction can create a more communicative learning environment. Activities like role plays, peer interviews, and problem-solving discussions promote real communication and help lower anxiety. This increase in comfort can ultimately boost learners' speaking confidence (Brown, 2001). Working together also improves social interaction and peer correction, which are important for language development in a safe atmosphere (Vygotsky, 1978).

Timely and Specific Feedback on Spoken Performance

Effective language instruction must include regular, timely, and specific feedback on learners' spoken performance. This feedback should focus on key areas like pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary use. According to Richards and Lockhart (1996), teacher feedback helps students spot gaps in their performance

and encourages them to self-correct, leading to long-term improvement. In contrast, inconsistent or unclear feedback, as reported by some students in the study, can slow progress and decrease learner engagement

Use of Mobile Learning Platforms and Language Learning Apps

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) tools and apps like Duolingo, HelloTalk, BBC Learning English, and Google's Read Along give students flexible, engaging, and personalized language practice. These platforms include features like voice recognition, instant feedback, gamified learning, and chances for global interaction. Godwin-Jones (2011) states that mobile apps help with self-paced learning and can support classroom instruction, particularly in resource-limited settings or large classrooms where individual practice may be difficult.

Organization of Language Clubs and Co-Curricular Activities

Language clubs and co-curricular activities like debates, extempore speaking, drama, and storytelling sessions provide non-academic spaces for students to practice English in real-life settings. These opportunities are especially helpful for improving fluency, spontaneity, and creativity in spoken communication. Taking part in these activities also boosts confidence, leadership skills, and teamwork (Bourke, 2008). Schools can support student-led language clubs and include English-speaking competitions in the academic calendar.

CONCLUSION

The study examined how English Language Teaching (ELT) practices can help diploma students in Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) improve their spoken English skills. The findings show that students understand the importance of English speaking skills for their future studies and careers. However, there is a clear gap between this understanding and the speaking practice opportunities available in the curriculum.

Many students reported that they speak English only occasionally in class, and nearly half felt neutral about their comfort level. This suggests limited fluency and low confidence. These results reflect Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which suggests that anxiety and lack of motivation can slow down language learning. Students also pointed out several challenges, such as limited vocabulary, grammar problems, poor

pronunciation, and few chances for structured speaking practice, as noted by Tuan and Mai (2015). Despite these issues, students showed a positive attitude toward improvement and offered useful suggestions, including more classroom interaction, encouraging peer communication, and using digital learning tools. This supports Brown's (2001) view that learner-centered instruction and communicative language teaching are key to improving speaking skills. Additionally, many studies show that task-based learning and interactive methods can encourage meaningful communication and lower learner anxiety (Nunan, 2004).

The study also revealed inconsistencies in how teachers provide feedback on spoken tasks, which is vital for skill development. As Harmer (2007) and Richards & Lockhart (1996) highlight, regular and constructive feedback is important for building learner confidence and awareness in using the language.

A key insight from the study was the students' desire for a specific module focused on speaking skills, which fits with the ideas of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) argue that ELT programs designed to meet the specific communication needs of students lead to better learning outcomes.

Based on these findings, the study recommends incorporating a structured, learner-centered, and needs-based spoken English component into the CSE diploma curriculum. Strategies could include peer-to-peer speaking activities, collaborative projects, using mobile learning tools (Godwin-Jones, 2011), and co-curricular platforms like language clubs and debates to foster a more supportive and immersive speaking environment.

By implementing these teaching strategies, institutions can improve communication skills, increase learners' confidence, and prepare them with the language skills they need for success in a global workforce. As noted by Basturkmen (2010), including discipline-specific language training is essential for equipping students to handle the language demands of their future jobs.

In conclusion, addressing the gap between students' awareness and their actual speaking performance requires commitment from institutions, redesigning the curriculum, and innovative, learner-focused approaches in ELT. Such efforts will help ensure that engineering students are not only technically skilled but also effective communicators in the global professional world

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