

## **Relevance of Listening and Speaking Skills for Engineering Students in Their Professional Career**

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**Abstract**

Communication is a fundamental element of people's life. It became an accomplishment in every business. An aspirant can aspire for goals and achieve goals when he/she has a good command over communication skills. The central idea of communication is to convey clearly and unambiguously. Communication becomes effective and successful only when the beneficiary gets the similar message as preferred by the sender. Communication includes the basic four skills viz. listening, speaking, reading, and writing. English being a universal language, communicating easily in English has become the most requisite for those who seek to shine well in the professional as well as academic domain. Engineering is one of the leading fields of learning in the world and. But it is experiential; though the students are technically superior they are in dire need of effective communication skills which decide their job opportunity in MNCs. The focus of this research paper is on listening as receptive skill and speaking as productive skill, which are simultaneously used in the process of communication. The researcher is a staff in Engineering College teaching Communication Skills. Thus, the researcher was instigated to find the factors responsible for their poor communication and discussed its importance and types of listening and speaking skills.

**Keywords:** Importance of Listening - Types of Listening - Listening Skills and an Engineer  
Listening for an employee - Importance of Speaking - Speaking skills for a Student and employee

**Introduction**

Communication has become the input to conquest in every organization. An individual cannot be winning and reach his goals if he does not possess good communication skills. On the other hand, an aspirant cannot survive without the adeptness of these skills. The main idea of communication is to express any content coherently and cohesively. Communication becomes effective and successful only when the recipient gets the same message as desired by the sender.

In modern days, effective communication plays a very high-flying role in the life of professional engineers. Communication is an essential part of people's life. Active or passive, verbal or nonverbal, written or oral, intentional or unintentional, communication is needed everywhere, whatever we do. We can achieve many of our goals and destinations through communication. The advancement of science and technology has witnessed a sea-change in the field of communication. Therefore, effective communication is needed for proper exchange of information. A small misunderstanding may cause problems and hindrances in the communication process. People have a tendency to commune with others. Whether specialized or own the success of any endeavor depends on the potentiality of his/her communication. According to Keith Davis, "Communication is the transfer of information and understanding from one person to another." To quote Bartol and Martin, "Communication is the exchange of messages between people for the purpose of achieving common meanings."

### **Statement of the Problem**

Though a lot of research has been done on speaking and listening, most of the students are facing many problems in learning speaking and listening skills. Particularly the first year Engineering students are facing problems on getting awareness their importance in their professional life, students' life as well and its usage with proficiency, accuracy and brevity.

### **Aim of the study**

The paper aimed to enable the students to analyze the elements of language and establish the appropriate relationship among linguistic or speaking and listening components.

And To acquire knowledge on speaking and listening skills

To improve speaking and listening skills with more proficiency

To classify the elements of speaking and listening skills

### **Research methodology**

The present paper is based on the collection practical materials and qualitative research methodology. Practical materials involve: to conduct a questionnaire about students' attitude toward speaking and listening skills; to identify learning efficient activities in developing listening and speaking skills; and to find solutions in improving listening and speaking skills of students. The subjects of the study are 100 first-year students from different groups, they were randomly chosen. They range from 16-18 years of age. The reason of choosing the first-year students for the study is our academic curriculum that focused on speaking and listening skills. The aim of questionnaire was to elicit students' background of English, students' attitude to listening and speaking skills, students' difficulties in listening and speaking. This questionnaire

helped us to find fruitful learning activities in developing listening and speaking skills, and to find solutions to reduce difficulties in listening and speaking skills

### **Hypothesis**

The aim of this study is to analyze the importance of listening and speaking skills in a target language acquisition in the engineering classroom in Hyderabad in Telangana. The main objective of this paper is to explain the difference between listening and speaking skills and to justify their importance in a target language.

### **Importance of Listening**

Listening is an important part of effective communication. Successful listening means not only to comprehend the words, or the message being communicated, but also to be apprised of how the speaker feels about what he is communicating. Listening is clue to successful working relationships among employees and between management and staff. It is said that the good listeners are often some of the best speakers. Asha Kaul in her book 'Business Communication' (2012 p 85-86) writes that the listening process comprises of three stages: Leveling, Sharpening, Assimilation. Successful progress and completion of these three stages determine the accuracy of the listening process. The authoress explains the process of listening with the example of planting a sapling. The first stage in the process of planting a sapling is that of leveling the ground and sifting the soil. The second stage sharpening is marking spots in the soil where the saplings are to be planted. The final stage assimilation is when the saplings are planted and watered. The authoress observes that during normal circumstances, the mind is kept open for flow of information. This is the first stage -leveling. The essential and relevant information is focused. This is the second stage – sharpening. The assimilation of relevant text takes place. This is the final stage – assimilation.

There can be no mutual understanding without listening. The objective of communication is to make others understand and act accordingly. Lel and Brown says, "Listening is an activity that can be turned on and off consciously and unconsciously. It starts with the receiver's becoming aware that they should listen and become attentive to what is being said." According to M.V. Rodrigues, "Listening is a process of receiving, interpreting and reacting to the messages received from the communication sender."

### **Types of Listening**

Listening is of six types: a) Informational listening b) Selective listening c) Active listening d) Critical listening e) Appreciative listening f) Evaluative listening

### **Informational Listening**

This type of listening demands conscious effort from listener and requires his/her full involvement. We use this listening most of the time in our lives. When a person listens to the news, watches a documentary an advertisement, all these come under informational listening. Most of our learning takes place because of informational learning. Much of the listening where people are engaged in their daily life falls under informative listening. At workplace, at schools and colleges, at the shopping centers, at the railway station or at the airport, informative listening plays a remarkable role in human communication. Informative listening is related with receiving facts and understands the message.

Robert Frost says – “Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self confidence.”

### **Selective Listening**

The listener listens to only significant and specific information. The listener does not pay attention to other topics or issues in the speech but he only pays his full attention to information and ideas related to his field of profession or his area of study or interest. Listeners listening span is conditioned by his/her urgency of needs and strength of information. This is a type of negative listening.

### **Active Listening**

Active listening requires attention, concentration, careful, deliberation and ability to comprehend the ideas of the speaker. The listener participates in communication process actively. He nods his head, leans forward or shows positive body language; which supports and encourages the speaker to communicate more enthusiastically. It is a way of listening and giving response quickly to another person which develops rapport between the speaker and the listener. Active listening involves communication technique. The listener during active listening fully concentrates, comprehends, retains and gives responses about what is spoken.

Jimmy Buffet reflects, “Older and wiser voices can help you find the right path, if you are only willing to listen.”

### **Critical Listening**

This type of listening involves critical evaluation of the speaker’s thoughts and ideas. The listener makes an estimate of value and relevance of speaker’s ideas, thoughts and opinions. This kind of listening is used in seminars, conferences and group discussions. Critical listening means to scrutinize what is being listened.

Richard Branson, “Being a good listener is absolutely critical to being good leader; you have to listen to the people who are on the front line.”

### **Appreciative Listening**

The listener appreciates and supports the speaker. The listener inspires and applauds the speaker which encourages the speaker to continue with zeal and enthusiasm. This is observed when people listen to music, attend concerts or theater, entertainment programmes, etc. The main idea of this listening is enjoyment and pleasure. Appreciative listening is for enjoyment and entertainment. A few examples are listening to music, watching T.V. The appreciation varies from person to person depending upon taste of every individual.

### **Evaluative Listening**

It is very appropriately said, “Critical listening is a rational process of evaluating arguments put forward by others.” Whereas Evaluative listening involves evaluation of the oral message or commentary and developing a line of thought, the listener interprets and analyses what he or she listens to in order to comprehend both the implicit and the explicit meaning of the oral message. The chief reason of evaluating listening is to evaluate the content of the oral message to select suitable information. Evaluative listening is particularly opposite when a person tries to influence us. We also try to distinguish between delicacies of language and understand the deeper meaning of what is said. Moreover, a person tries to find out the pros and cons of an issue. In evaluative listening, the listener fully understands the speaker and then evaluates that message. The listener evaluates if the information received is significant or insignificant, biased or unbiased, correct or incorrect, organized or unorganized. For example - A voter who listens to the stunning speech of a politician can decide; if the points stressed by the politician/speaker were really worth to earn his vote.

**Advantages of Listening:** the following can be advantages of listening

- Reduction of Tension
- Productivity Increases
- Boosts Confidence
- Listening Improves Thinking
- Knowledge is enhanced

### **Listening Skills and an Engineer**

In the present globalised communicate world, engineers are expected to possess effective listening skills. It is said, “Effective listening is a skill that underpins all the positive human relationships; spend some time thinking about and developing your listening skills - they are the building blocks of success.” Many business personalities and top leaders acclaim their success to

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better listening skills. Listening is a quality that a leader should possess. Those who listen to their employees are in an advantageous situation to lead the entire team. Gone are the days, where it was believed that one approach fits all. Now people who incorporate listening skills are regarded to be more successful in life. In fact, one cannot imagine any academic professional or business work where expertise in listening skills is not required. Lee Tacocca says, “I only wish I could find an institution that teaches people how to listen. After all, a good manager needs to listen at least as much as he needs to talk... real communication goes in both directions.” It is a known fact that students have to listen a lot during their academic and professional career.

### **Listening for an Employee**

After completing their engineering graduation, engineers as professionals are required to attend various conferences, seminars, meetings, workshops and symposia. During all these occasions they have to listen with utmost interest to the speakers which will help them not only to enhance their knowledge but also to furnish them the points on which they can reflect or speak. Only a good listener can exhibit his knowledge and talent properly in the form of speech. Engineers have to attend and listen to presentations on various occasions and reasons. Malcom Forbes rightly puts, “The art of conversation lies in listening.” Moreover, everyday they have to listen to a lot of people like friends, colleagues, clients, juniors and seniors.

### **Importance of Speaking**

All the four skills of language – reading, writing, listening and speaking are all interdependent and interlinked. Expertise in every skill is essential to become an effective communicator, but the capability to speak proficiently bestows the speaker with various benefits. The ability to speak effectively enables the speaker to build up his confidence level. Effective speaking skills help to draw the attention of the audience, providing a chance for the speaker to make the message understand. A good speaker can draw the attention of his spectators with meaningful words. He can deliver his speech or message in an effective and informative way which is appreciated and understood by everyone. Effective speaking skills can put on a pedestal one’s negotiation skills. An increasing sense of satisfaction evolves from the speaking in front of a large public and in due course, a kind of credibility to the speaker. Speaking skills are crucial for successful career but definitely not restricted to one’s professional desires. Effective speech can improve one’s personal and social life too. Speaking skill is and will always be a noteworthy skill which needs to be enriched completely. Effective speaking skills help you to make new friends, way to various job opportunities, openings for creative works, possibilities to travel and many more. It is through effective communication that we grow and prosper. A speaker’s skills and speech habits have an impact on the success of any exchange (Van Duzer, 1997). Speaking capability needs much effort. An idea, however great might be, cannot be effective, if it is not properly communicated. Speaking helps a person to learn concepts and improve vocabulary.

## **Occasions for Speaking Presentations**

Professionals particularly engineers have to give presentations on various occasions. The presentations may be for their juniors or superiors or clients or colleagues. Presentation is not an act but communicating and talking with others. A presentation is a formal talk addressed to a group of people. The speaker conveys his ideas or information in a clear, concise and structured way by his presentation. The presenter or speaker has to keep in mind the following aspects while giving a presentation.

The speaker during presentation should take heed of his audience. In other words, the speaker should know their expectations and what bothers them.

The speaker should choose a topic which should be interesting and create a positive impact among the audience. Moreover, the presentation should be effective and properly presented.

The speaker should give the presentation in a novel or new way. The audience expects a change. Thus, if the presentation is tedious or traditional, the audience will not be attentive towards the speaker. Thus, the speaker should make sure that he/she should get the attention of audience. The speaker should be highly energetic and enthusiastic while giving the presentation. Otherwise, even if the ideas are significant and perfect, the presentation may fail, if it's unstimulating and uninspiring.

The speaker should involve his/her audience to be attentive and curious towards the speaking by interacting with them and questioning them in regard his/her content. This he can do by interacting with them. The speaker can ask questions, satisfy their curiosity and clarify their doubts, crack jokes occasionally and share humorous quotes. The audience will get a feeling that the speaker is directly talking with them. The speaker should take care of his speed during presentation. It should neither be too fast or too slow. The speaker should keep in mind that an average person speaks about one twenty five words per minute.

## **Meetings**

According to Oxford dictionary, "A meeting is an occasion when people come together to discuss or decide something." During a meeting, a decision is taken on a specific matter or on an issue which involves the interest of everyone. Meetings are organized so that members discuss freely on a particular topic and express their views, opinions, thought or ideas and finally a decision is taken where different and distinguished people has to make their points in relation to the meeting.

## **Group Discussion**

It is structured and purposeful oral activity. It is defined also as, “The process of examining or considering something in detail in a group.” Group discussion is executed as a tool by esteemed organizations for ruling solutions, for intriguing discussions and for absorbing candidates for employment. Generally, group discussions are organized to assess if the applicants have the anticipated qualities or not. If the applicants are found to be satisfactory in all respects, then obviously they are selected by the competent authority. In a group discussion, a candidate has to speak fluently to influence others. For influencing others, a candidate has to speak effectively and simultaneously, impress his co-partners by his knowledge in the subject. Audre Lorde aptly says, “When we speak, we are afraid our words will not be heard or welcomed. But we are silent, we are still afraid. So, it is better to speak.” A candidate who succeeds in drawing the attention of the public creates a positive impression. Engineers should possess expertise in speaking skills. Effective speaking skills not only will help them to fetch a decent job but also aid them to grow and prosper and progress in career constantly.

## **Public Speaking**

There are many occasions where an engineer is required to speak in front of a huge crowd. It could be social or official gatherings. No matter what your area of responsibility or the type of organization for which you work, you will sooner or later, expected to make a speech. You may be asked to speak with juniors, seniors, clients, suppliers, colleagues or the common public. Speaking fluently and powerfully is a talent which is worth learning. Fortunately, public speaking can be learnt and enhanced. Irrespective of whom you are speaking to, the topic or the span of your presentation and your capability to communicate powerfully with the public and involve them directly reflects on your company and you. If you are unsuccessful to present your work and ideas professionally or represent your organization properly, then it will surely affect company’s reputation as well as damage your career goals or prospects. Public speaking is the art of diluting a two-minute idea with a two-hour vocabulary.” – Evan Esar Public.

## **Interviews**

An interview is a conversation between two persons – the interviewer and the interviewee. Here various questions are posed by the interviewer to identify the innate talents, traits and also to procure information from the interviewee. The most important phase of an engineer in his life is once he completes his engineering graduation, he looks for a decent job; for which he has to appear for an interview. Job interviews play a crucial role in the life of an engineer. During the interview, the employer looks out for candidates who are excellent in communication skills particularly speaking, listening as well. An engineering graduate may be academically excellent, but he needs to prove himself in front of the interviewers. He has to express himself confidently.

### **Advantages of Speaking:**

- Confidence is Increased
- Growth in Career
- Gains Recognition

### **Speaking Skills for a Student**

Students have to speak with their faculties and their peers. The students have to speak during academic discussions, during practical and oral examination, during technical presentations, seminars, workshops and many more occasions. As a student of engineering he has to take part in many activities and programmes where speaking in English is mandatory. He has to speak in English while giving technical presentation, extempore, group discussion, debate, inter college competitions, oral and practical examination and on many such occasions.

### **Speaking for an Employee**

After having completed their engineering graduation, engineers as professionals are required to speak in conferences, seminars, meetings, video conferences, telephonic conversations and so on. In fact engineers can attain success in the present day, not simply by procuring professional knowledge but also the talent to exhibit that knowledge properly in the form of speech. Engineers have to give presentations on various occasions and reasons. The presentations may be for their juniors or superiors or clients or colleagues. A presentation is a formal talk addressed to a group of people. The speaker should take care of his body language, gestures, postures, eye contact and voice modulation.

“Speak clearly, if you speak at all. Carve every word before you let it fall.” – Oliver Wendell Holmes.

“Think like a wise man but communicate in the language of the people.” – William Butler Yeats

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