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# Daath Voyage : An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in English

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Editor : Saikat Banerjee

**Editor:** Dr. Saikat Banerjee  
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
St. Theresa International College, Thailand.



## **A Study of English Pedagogy at Select Government Engineering Universities of Punjab**

**Dr. Chanchal Narang<sup>1</sup>**  
**Ms. Neha Setia<sup>2</sup>**

**Abstract:** “Skills such as problem-solving, communications, interpersonal skills, and critical and independent thinking should be fostered in engineering education, not just because they are qualities that employers look for but because they should be part of any tertiary education.”<sup>3</sup> (Beder 46). The demand for a talented engineer who has the ability to communicate proficiently is increasing day by day in the global world. However, there is much difference between the communication skills being taught by different institutes and the expectations from industry. Through the present paper, the researcher has tried to explore whether English courses for Engineering students are helping them to prepare for the communication skills that are considered prerequisites to shape the career of future engineers. So, in order to validate it, a pilot study is conducted to check the English pedagogy at selected government aided universities of Punjab.

**Keywords:** Communication skills, Engineering students, Syllabus, Language lab

### **Introduction**

Communication is essential to any human interface. The process of communication entails the ability of the individual to communicate across barriers and beyond boundaries, which improves the growth of humanity. Nowadays, it is necessary for everybody to have good command over the English language, and this is true specially for professionals who work in the field of information and technology. Opportunities for employment depend upon their abilities to communicate effectively in English. As observed, most of the Engineering students lack the required level of communication skills, specifically when they have to face the requirement to communicate effectively in their professional areas. Even the Engineers with excellent

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<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor of English at UILS, PU, Chandigarh

<sup>2</sup>UGC-JRF at Dept. of English and Cultural Studies, PU, Chandigarh

<sup>3</sup>Beder, S. “Valuable skills learned from basket weaving.” *Engineers Australia*, Mar. 2000, p. 46.



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technical skills suffers while interacting among themselves. Communication is the major key to success as it enhances the whole profile of the professional engineer. This has been rightly pointed out by Polack- Wahl that "Indeed, communication skills are considered to be a valuable career enhancer."<sup>4</sup>

### **Statement of the problem**

The researcher herself, being a science student with an engineering background, is well-versed with the problems faced by fresh engineering graduates. Also, they face many hardships while communicating in situations like facing job interviews or other interviews, group discussion rounds, or even presenting themselves in professional situations. In the words of Clement and Murugavel, "Many engineering graduates in India are found to be unemployable due to their poor communication skills and lack of confidence. There have been a lot of research papers that have recapped the importance of improving engineering graduates' employability skills; however, the problem of poor communication skills grows unabated in India."<sup>5</sup> (116). Every Engineering course offers the teaching of English language or communication skills in their curricula, even then the problem of lack of communication skills on the part of fresh engineering graduates still exists. This is very shocking as after having studied English till class 12<sup>th</sup> with further training in Engineering course, still the students are not able to speak English fluently and confidently. So, the teachers must initiate to improve the communication skills of the students by properly evaluating the English pedagogy.

### **Objectives**

- To study the communication ability and language behaviour of the Engineering graduates.
- To examine the need to update the English syllabus required of the Engineering department.

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<sup>4</sup>Polack-Wahl, J.A., "It is time to stand up and communicate." *30th Annual Frontiers in Education Conference. Building on A Century of Progress in Engineering Education*, Kansas City, USA, 2000, pp. F1G-16-F1G-21.

<sup>5</sup>Clement, A., and T. Murugavel. "English for Employability: A Case Study of the English Language Training Need Analysis for Engineering Students in India." *English Language Teaching*, Vol. 8, no. 2, Canadian Center of Science and Education, 20 Jan. 2015, pp. 116-125.



- To analyse whether the present teaching methodology is effective in the classroom.

### **Review of literature**

Different researchers have applied different approaches and strategies to deal with the issues related to English language teaching.

As, in *The Teaching of English at the select Engineering Colleges of Northern India: A Critical Analysis and the Model Syllabus*, by “Jalaluddin Mohammad” (2017) critically analyse English syllabi prescribed at different engineering institutes in northern India, for the students of the engineering department. It suggests that the syllabus need to be updated regularly and should match the requirements of the industry.

The article “*Communication Skill: A Prerequisite for Engineers*” by Tarjani Dakshesh Sheth (2015) deals with the importance of communication in the life of an engineer. The researcher aims to develop communication and professional skills, using English as a kind of mediator in shaping future engineers. This article discusses the need for an engineer to compete with the world holding two weapons-communication and technical skills.

“*Content or Skills? :An analysis of the Tamilnadu State Board Draft syllabus in English*” by S. Vincent (2018), in this paper, the researcher presents an analysis of the syllabus by examining the Preamble to the syllabus, finding out the qualities and drawbacks of the draft syllabus and proposing suggestions for reframing it.

### **Research Methodology**

This study is basically a pilot study to check the present status of English Language Teaching (ELT) in three government aided Engineering universities of Punjab i.e. Giani Zail Singh College of Engineering and Technology, Punjab Technical University, Guru Nanak Dev University, Punjabi University. These universities were shortlisted because of their strategic location and their demand in the region. A large number of students qualify each year from these universities. The researcher has selected the sample of 50 students of B.Tech final year from Giani Zail Singh College of Engineering and Technology. Then, the questionnaire was designed to check students' attitude



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towards English Language Teaching (ELT) and also to know the problems that exist in English pedagogy, whether it is the syllabus or the teaching methodology or both. The questionnaire has been prepared to get information related to students' Educational background, syllabus, communication skills, exposure to language lab and teaching methodology. Further, the language behaviour of the students is tested by analysing the questionnaire filled by the students and later on, the syllabus of these universities is evaluated in order to check whether the components of the syllabus have been delivered successfully.

### **Student analysis**

The aim of the study is to locate the core problem areas and existing gaps i.e. whether it is at the level of curriculum, methodology, objectives, teaching activities, materials, or classroom techniques. Thus, this section contains the analysis of the responses of the students obtained through a questionnaire<sup>6</sup> received from government engineering college i.e.

**College Name:** GianiZail Singh College of Engineering and Technology, Punjab Technical University (Jalandhar)

Classes	Medium of Learning		
	English	Hindi	Punjabi
1 <sup>st</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup>	40	6	4
6 <sup>th</sup> - 10 <sup>th</sup>	45	3	2
11 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup>	50	0	0

The result of the above question shows that the number of students who studied from English medium is much higher than any other medium, as there is a decrease in number of students in

<sup>6</sup>Narang, Chanchal. *Usage to use evaluating interactive language teaching as classroom pedagogy at undergraduate level*. 2006. Panjab University, PhD dissertation.





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Hindi and Punjabi medium as compared to English in secondary level of education.

**Tick the right option in the following questions:**

**1) Which language do you use at the following places?**

S. No.	Places/Situation	Hindi	English	Punjabi
1.	At home with your family members.	4	0	46
2.	With your friends/classmates in the classroom.	6	3	41
3.	With your teachers in the classroom.	5	42	3
4.	When you go to Banks, Offices, University etc.	12	2	36
5.	When you meet new people.	24	8	18
6.	When you go to a hospital or visit a doctor.	20	5	25

Here, from the analysis, maximum of the students speaks in their local language, whether it is a formal or informal situation except the third one, in which majority of the students agree to speak in English with their teachers.

**2) Which language do you think you will be required to speak if you go to a new place for higher/professional studies?**

**(a) English**

**(b) Punjabi**

**(c) Any other, specify**



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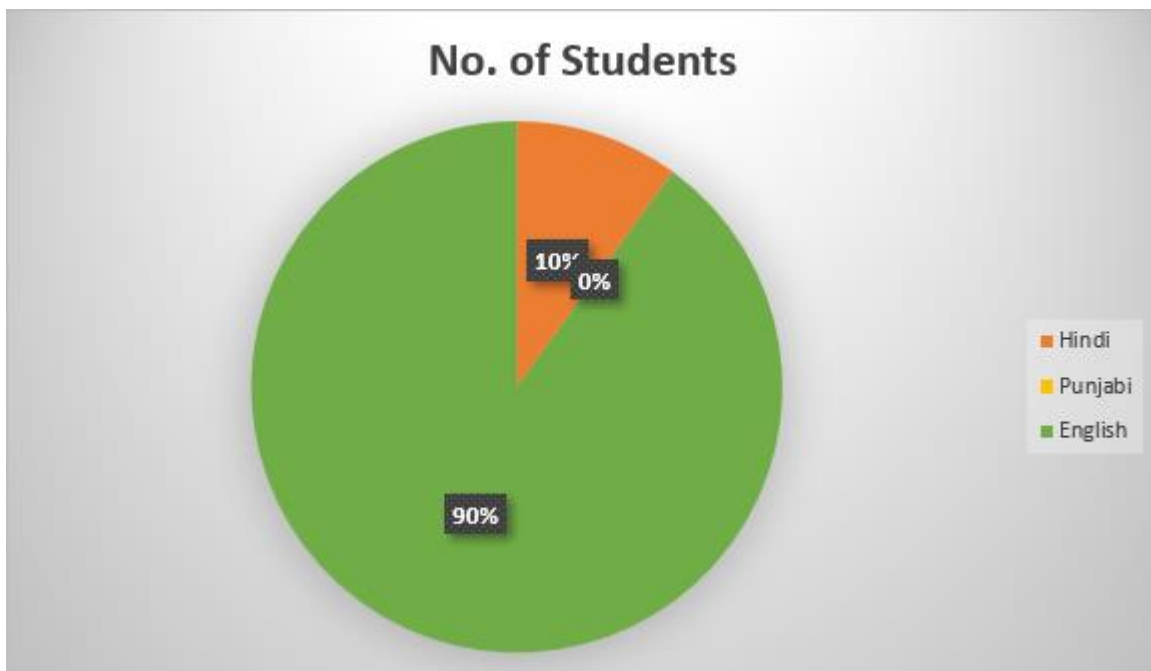
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Hindi	English	Punjabi
5	45	0

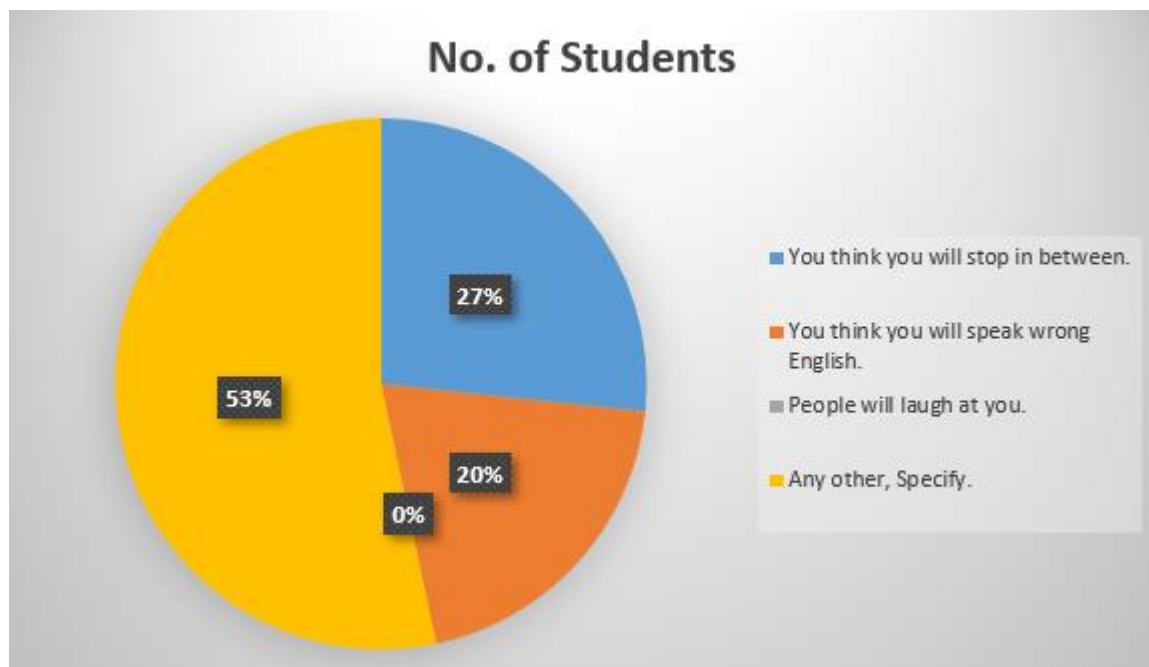


Responses of question no. 2 reveal that the majority of the students think that they will speak English if they go to a new place for higher/professional studies. And yes, it is true because the English language is widely accepted all over in the world and one must speak English to convey their ideas at this platform.

**3) Why don't you always speak in English?**

- (a) You think you will stop in between.**
- (b) You think you will speak wrong English.**
- (c) People will laugh at you.**
- (d) Any other, Specify.**

You think you will stop in between	You think you will speak wrong English	People will laugh at you	Any other, specify
14	10	0	Others prefer Native language



In this situation, more than 50% of the students prefer to speak their native language, as they feel more comfortable in it. According to them, students at their native place try to speak in native language. Some of the other students think that they will either stop in between or will speak wrong English, which indicates that they don't have confidence over them and also, they lack in communication skills.

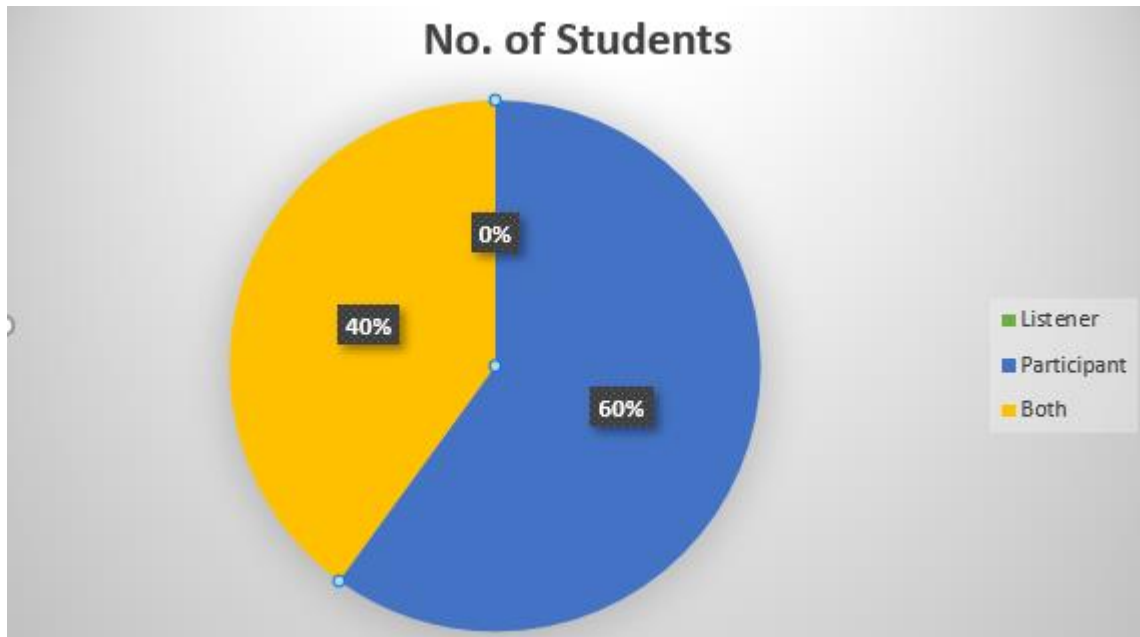
**4) What should be the role of the student in the classroom?**

- (a) Listener
- (b) Participant
- (c) Both





<b>Listener</b>	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Both</b>
<b>0</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>20</b>

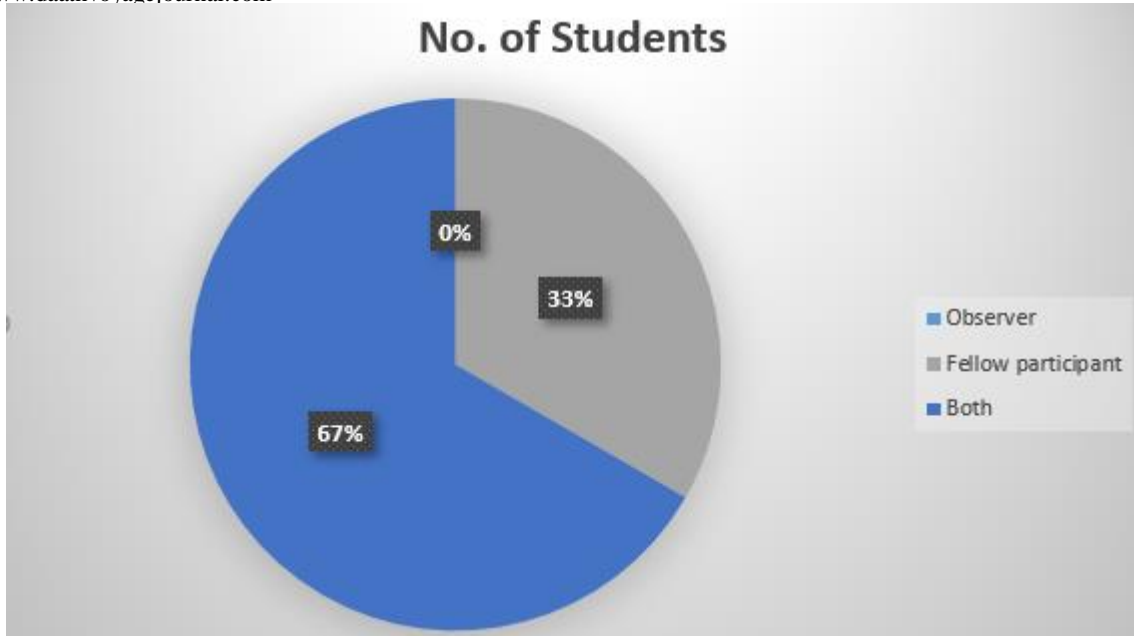


In this, 60% of the students believe that the students role in the classroom should be that of a participant, so that the student can actively participate in the classroom discussions. Nowadays, teachers should apply learner-centred approach in the classroom.

**5) What should be the role of a teacher in the classroom?**

- (a) Observer**
- (b) Fellow participant**
- (c) Both**

<b>Observer</b>	<b>Fellow participant</b>	<b>Both</b>
<b>0</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>34</b>



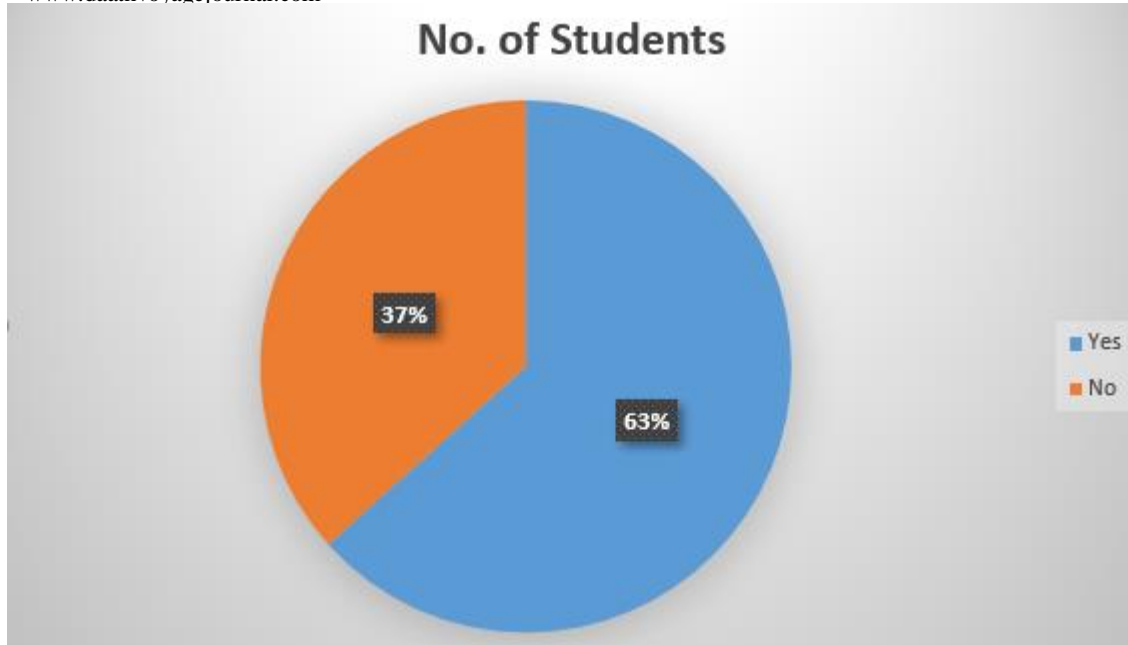
In response to this question, around 67% of the students feel that the teacher should play both, the role of the observer as well as the fellow participant. According to them, a teacher should observe and also guide the students in order to improve their performances.

**6) Do you think English course should be taught in all the years of Engineering course?**

**(a) Yes**

**(b) No**

Yes	No
32	18

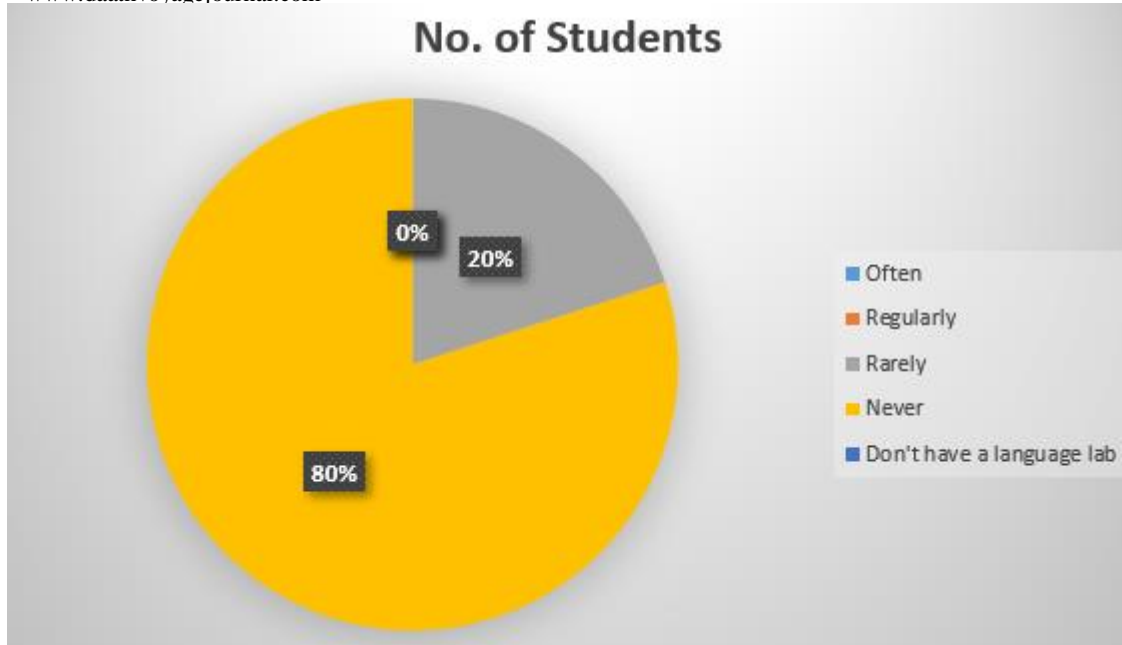


Responses here reveals that more than 60% of the students feel that the English language course should be taught in all the years of Engineering so that it could help them in improving their overall personality. College authorities should take a note of this.

**7) How often do you use language lab?**

- (a) Often
- (b) Regularly
- (c) Rarely
- (d) Never
- (e) Don't have a language lab

Often	Regularly	Rarely	Never	Don't have a language lab
0	0	10	40	0

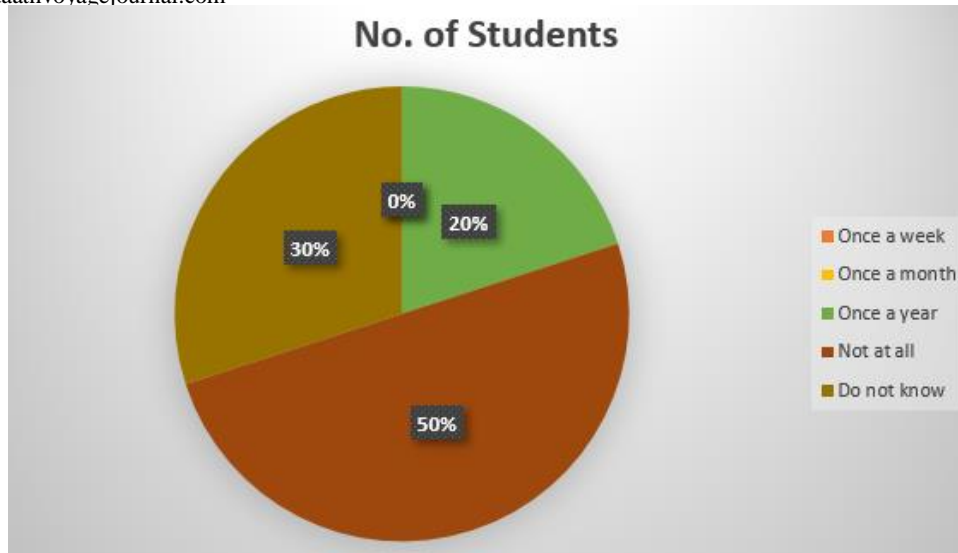


The analysis of the question reveals that from all, 80% of the students have never used a language lab (which is equally important for the improvement in the English language). Students should take maximum benefits from it, as it will help them practically to improve their spoken skills.

**8) How often does your placement cell provide training to face the interview for campus placement?**

- (a) Once a week
- (b) Once a month
- (c) Once a year
- (d) Not at all
- (e) Do not know

Once a week	Once a month	Once a year	Not at all	Do not know
0	0	10	25	15

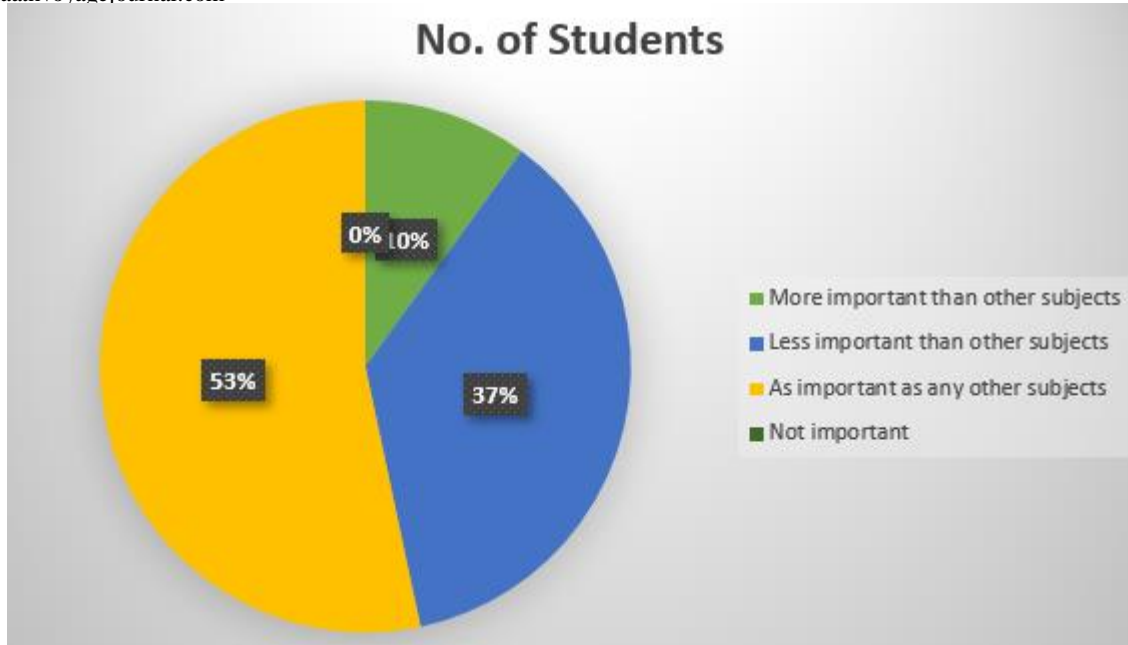


The responses show that the placement cells of different colleges do not provide training to face the interviews for the campus placement. So, the main aim of the placement cells should be to organize orientation programs and to prepare graduates for different levels in the placement like interviews and group discussions.

**9) How important do you think the English language is in comparison with other subjects?**

- (a) More important than other subjects
- (b) Less important than other subjects
- (c) As important as any other subjects
- (d) Not important

More important than other subjects	Less important than other subjects	As important as any other subjects	Not important
6	17	27	0

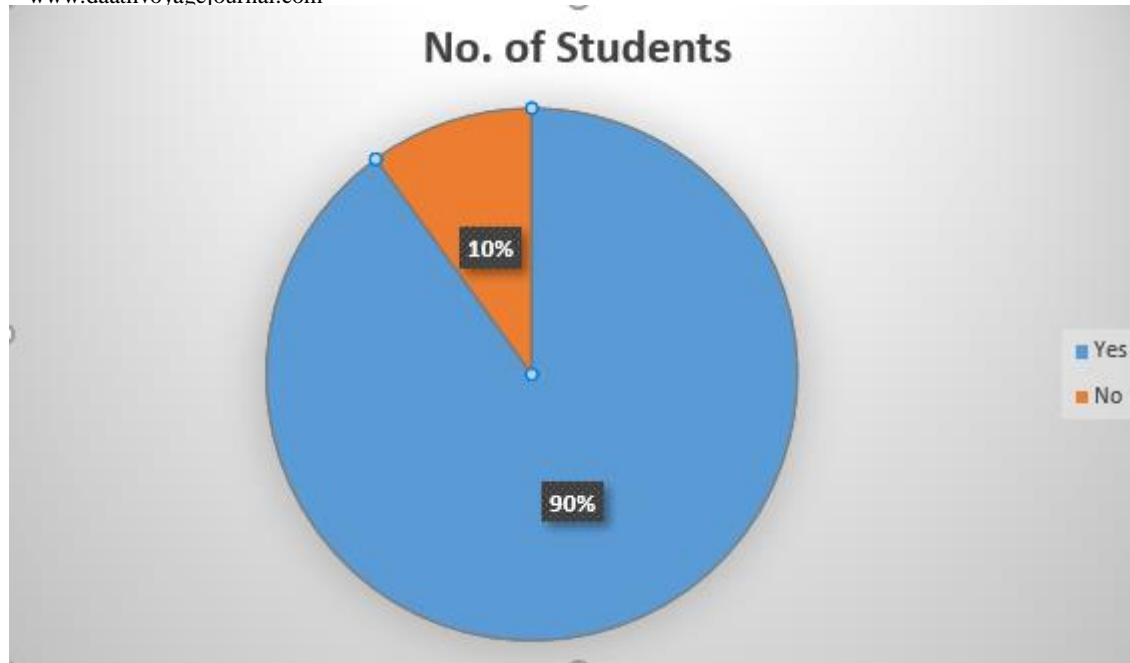


In this, more than 50% of the students feel that the English language is equally as important as any other subjects of Engineering course. So, one should not neglect it and practice it on regular basis and College Authorities should also add this as a mandatory subject in the whole Engineering course.

**10) Do you need intensive training in communication skills regularly to get ready for the job interview?**

Yes	No
45	5

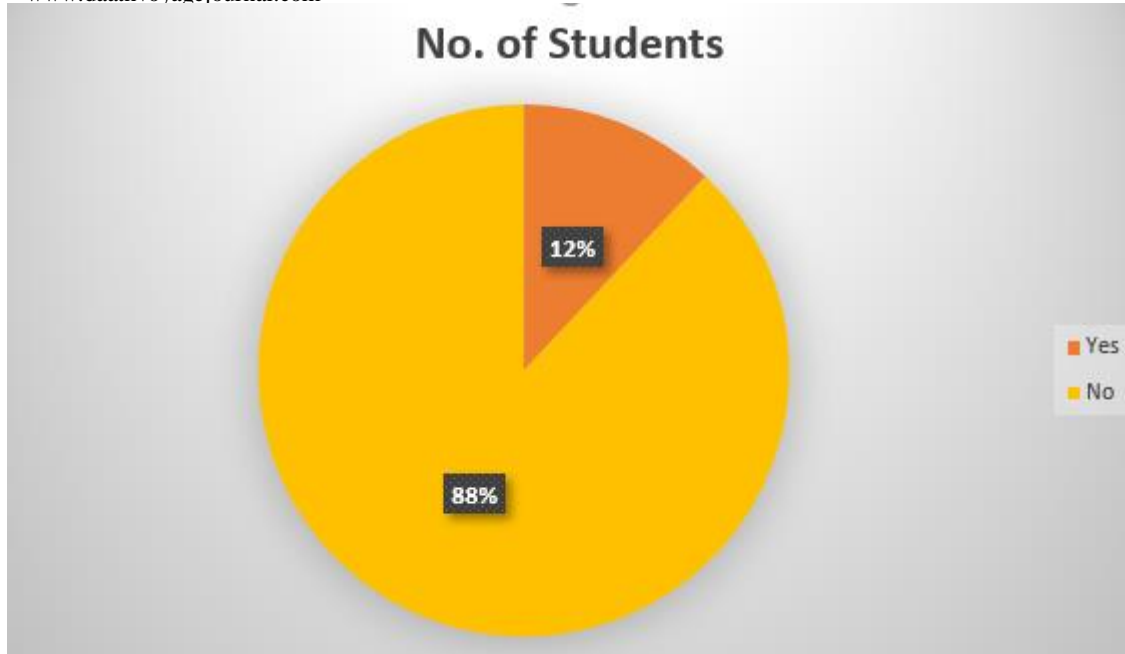




Here, 90% of the students think that regular intensive training in communication skills can make them ready for job interviews. So, teachers should make an effort to provide regular training to students, which will further help them in their placements.

**11) Have you ever been prepared for the job interview in the classroom or by the placement cell?**

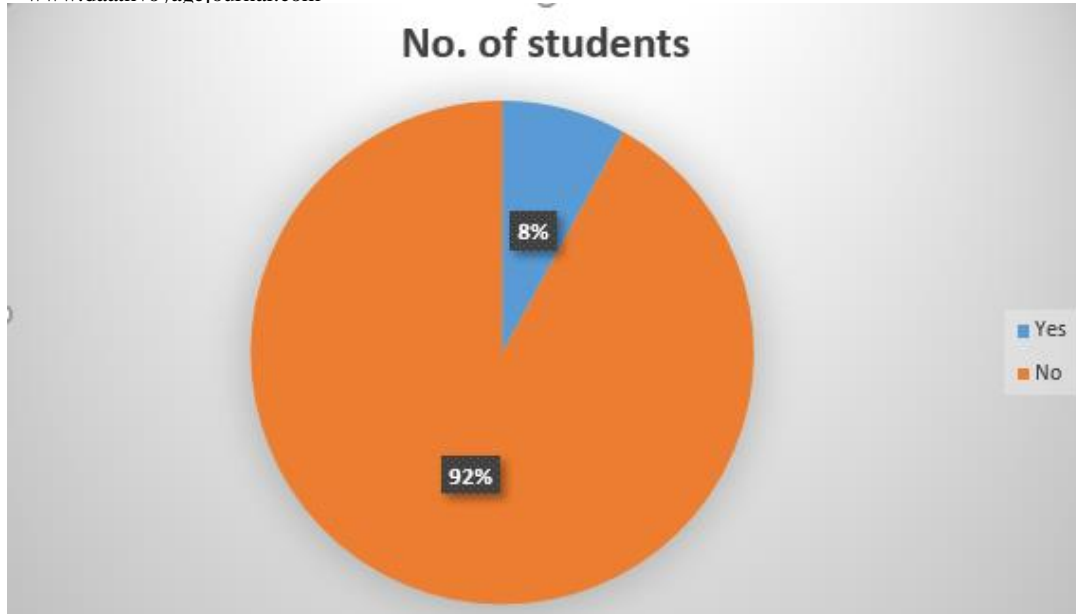
<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>44</b>



Here, the analysis shows that maximum of the students feel that they were not being prepared for the job interviews, neither in the classroom, nor by the placement cell. Interviews are the main criteria for the selection in the placements. So, the university should take initiative to provide proper a platform to the graduate students.

**12) Have you ever been prepared for the group discussion in the classroom or by the placement cell?**

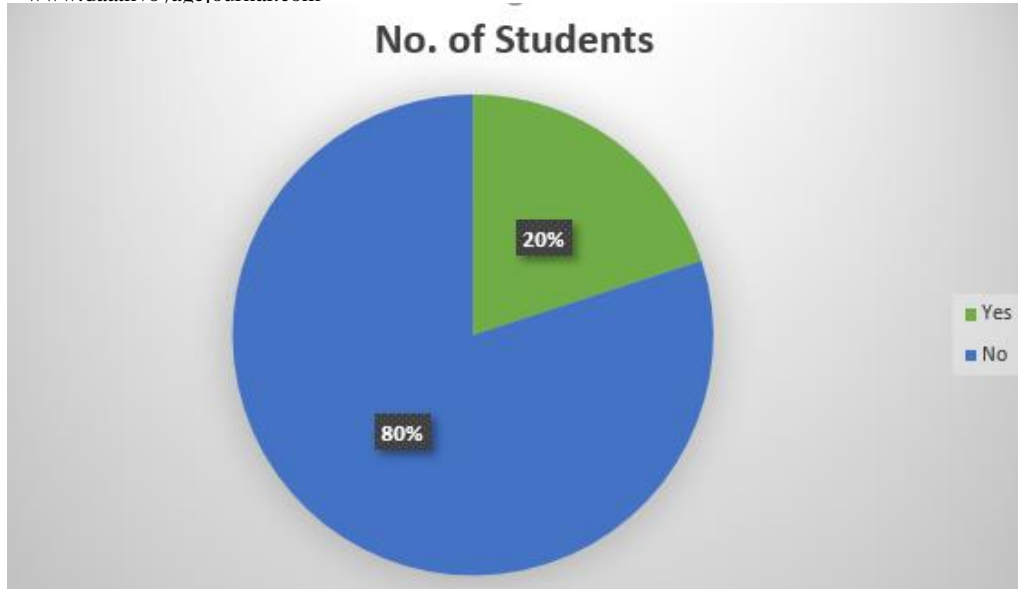
Yes	No
4	46



Same is the case with group discussion, as around 92% of the students have never faced any group discussion round in their graduation. They are unaware of the rules and regulations to be followed during the whole process. Proper group discussion sessions should be provided to the students and the students should actively participate in it.

**13) Have you ever been given a chance to deliver a speech of one or two minutes in the classroom?**

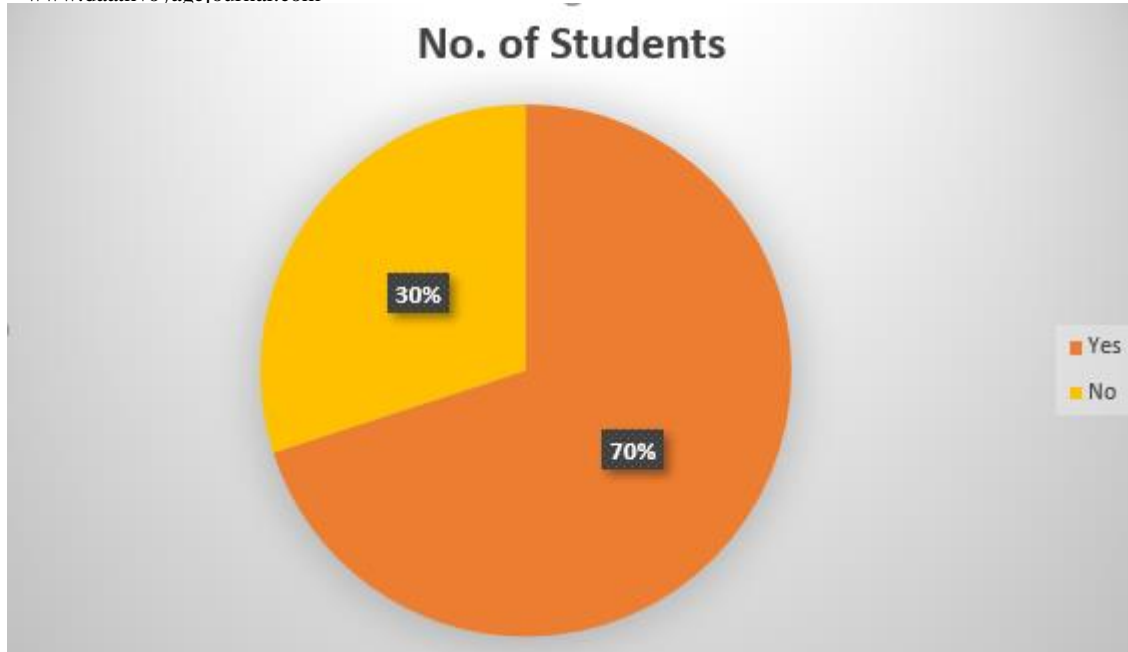
Yes	No
10	40



In this, approx. 80% of the students agree to this question that they have never been given a chance to deliver a speech in the classroom. This will provide them with the chance to improve their spoken skills and will also boost their confidence. An effort also to be made from the teacher's side as well. They should encourage students to participate and involve equally.

**14) Have you ever been given an opportunity to communicate with industry?**

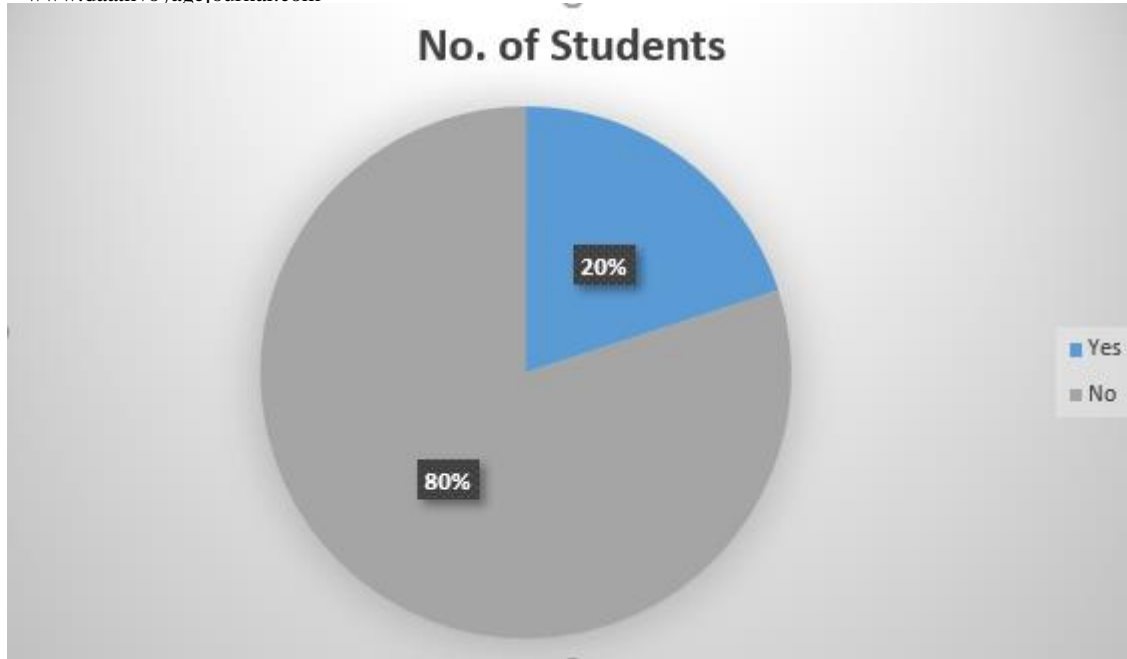
Yes	No
35	15



Here, maximum of the students agreed that they were given the opportunity to communicate with industry. As they said, they were given chance to visit some of the industries and to communicate with the working staff. It was a great opportunity for the students to interact with the staff there and to acquire knowledge from them.

**15) If Yes, in the above question, then, do you think you were able to communicate there properly?**

Yes	No
10	40



As in relevance to the previous question, maximum students agreed that though they were given chance to visit some of the industries to interact with the staff members and the workers but 80% of the students among them feel that they were unable to communicate with them because of the poor communication skills. So, on the whole, it was a disappointing activity, as the students failed to communicate and acquire new knowledge.

So, from the questionnaire, it can be clearly seen that although there is a proper communication skill's syllabus for the engineering students still there is some sort of backlog in it, as the students are dissatisfied among themselves. Thus, this prompted the researcher to deeply analyse the syllabus of communication skills in the engineering department.

### **Syllabus Analysis**

"A syllabus must specify a starting point, which should be related to realistic assessment of the levels of beginning students and ultimate goals which may or may not be realized depending on the abilities of learners and their purpose in a particular course."<sup>7</sup> (Brumfit75).

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<sup>7</sup>Brumfit, Christopher, editor. *General English Syllabus Design*. Pergamon Press and British Council, London, 1984.  
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Syllabus of an institute can be defined as the descriptive outline and summary of topics which need to be covered in a given time frame of any course or a programme. It should be clear, concise, specific and also underline the main aim and objectives of the course. It is kind of a contract between the students and college, so it should be well organized to make teaching and learning process more productive. Below is given the syllabus analysis of three government aided universities of Punjab.

### Analysis of Theory Section

S. No.	University Name	Subject Name	Number of semesters for which the English is offered	Credits	Contact Hours/Week	Course Content	Thrust Area
1.	Guru Nanak Dev University (Amritsar)	Communicative English	1	2	3	1) Making Connections: A Strategic Approach to Academic Reading by Kenneth J. Pakenham. 2) The Written Word by Vandana R. Singh.	Reading Skills
						Master "Word List" and "Correct Usage of Commonly Used Words and	Vocabulary



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						Phrases” from the Chapter “Vocabulary” in the book The Written Word.	
						Learn “Report Writing” and “Letter Writing” as in the book The Written Word.	Writing Skills
2.	Punjabi University (Patiala)	Communicati on Skills	1	2.5	3	Process of communicati on, Semantic gap, Types and channels of communicati on, Significance of communicati on in a professional organization.	Communicati on
						Reading purposes, gears, types and effective strategies of reading.	Reading Skills
						Elements of effective writing, writing styles, use of homonyms, cloze tests, one word	Writing Skills



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						substitution, abbreviations etc.	
						Tenses, Words used as different parts of speech, Transformation of sentences, Active and Passive voice, Narration, correction of Sentences.	Grammar
3.	GianiZail Singh College of Engineering and Technology, PTU (Jalandhar )	Communicative English	1	3	3	English and Communication Skills for Students of Science and Engineering by S. P. Dhanavel, Orient Blackswan.	Reading Skills
						Anne Laws Writing Skills, exercises given at the end of each lesson of Dhanavel's book. Writing Business letters, reports, E-mails.	Writing Skills
						Building up and expansion of	Vocabulary



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						vocabulary; active use of the prescribed expressions in the appropriate context.	
						Revising and practicing a prescribed set of grammar items; using grammar actively while processing or producing language.	Grammar

**Analysis of Practical Section**

S. No.	University Name	Subject Name	Number of semester	Credits	Contact Hours/Week	Course Content	Thrust Area	Visit to Lab
1.	Guru Nanak Dev University (Amritsar)	Written and Oral Technical Communication Skills	1	1	2	Technical Presentation on the emerging areas of Information Technology	Written and Oral Skills	Rarely
2.	Punjabi University (Patiala)	Communication Skills Lab	1	1	2	Elements and kinds of business letters; quotations and tenders, job application, Resume, Agenda, Memorandum, Report	Business Correspondence	Never



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						writing, E-mail etiquettes.		
						Process of listening, kinds of listening, barriers to listening, how to become an effective listener and feedback skills.	Listening Skills	
						Speech Mechanism, articulation of sounds, phonetic transcription, components of effective talk, group discussion, interview skills, conducting meetings, oral presentation skills, types and use of audio visual aids in presentation.	Speaking Skills	



3.	GianiZail Singh College of Engineering and Technology, PTU (Jalandhar)	Communication Skills Laboratory	1	1	2	Lab exercises related to Role play, Question-Answer discussion, Presentation of papers, Seminars.	Listening and Speaking skills	Never
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### Suggestions

After analysing the questionnaire and the syllabus, the mismatch between the expectations and actual linguistic behaviour of students at exit level can be easily noticed. This can also occur due to the flaw in the teaching methodology. So, the following suggestions have been made to improve the quality of teaching and learning process of Engineering graduates.

- **Job Requirement** – The English course should be designed in such a way that it should fulfil the industry's needs and requirements globally. Also, to make them capable to solve real-world problems.
- **Syllabus Designing** – While designing the syllabus, syllabus designers should know the requirements of the industry as well as the HRs. This way the students will be able to concentrate only on the specific part required for their selection in the job and the syllabus needs to be updated after some time according to the needs of the students.
- **Teaching Methodology** – It includes principles and methods which help the students' learning process effective. The main motive of the teacher is to pass knowledge and information to the students. Teachers should include different activities and methods to make the teaching and learning process more interesting. Teachers should manage what, when and how the syllabus need to be taught to the students in the best way.
- **Language Labs** – Students were not satisfied with the language lab part as the majority of the students have never used language labs. All the practical sessions need to be done in the





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lab in presence of a teacher. Teachers should encourage students to attend a language lab in order to improve their skills through mock interviews, group discussions, role play etc. This will further help them in enhancing their spoken skills.

- **Educational background of the students** – As we know, students come from a diverse educational background, do they face difficulties in the English course. Teachers should pay more attention to students who are weak in English and should motivate them to improve their communication skills.

### Conclusion

India is the fastest growing economy in the world and due to this, the foreign investments in our country are increasing at a fast pace, so a great opportunity lies for our Engineers to get recruited. Although numerous graduates pass out each year, just a few among them steps into the real professional world. This is due to the lack of communication skills, that the students are not able to match the standards set by different multinational companies outside India. According to TarjaniSheth, “It can be concluded that today’s engineer has to compete with the world holding two weapons- technical skills and communication skills.”<sup>8</sup>(51). The unification of language and communication enhancement courses is an important element of continuous learning. So, Universities should play a prominent role in developing communication skills apart from technical skills in engineering students to sustain in the world of globalization.

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