

Hear To Speak: Listening Strategies For Speaking For The Less Proficient English Speaking Students At Ngm College, Pollachi

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Abstract

Language is a process of cognitive development, and most students wish to enhance their language skills to upgrade their profile for better jobs. This research focuses on well-being and learning opportunities among rural students in the Pollachi area. Speaking English is a challenging task for most students because of their social background. To eliminate their fears and barriers to language learning, this research develops the module based on a student-centred approach. Experimental study methods were adopted to understand the effectiveness of modules in language learning. The study gives special attention to first-generation learners and recommends steps to be taken in the higher education platform. The study collaborated and examined the different modules to create effective language classrooms at the college level.

Keywords: Experimental study, Listening, Module design, Rural Students, Speaking, Student-centred learning.

Introduction

Language and communication is a compound of different skills but most people consider speaking as an assessing point to judge anyone's communication. The lack of speaking skills leads to an inferiority complex and psychological imbalance among learners. Language is the process of cognitive development; young learners show a high-level interest to learn a new language to enhance their profile for better jobs. This project focuses on well-being and learning opportunities among rural students in the Pollachi area. Speaking in English

is a challenging task for most students because of their social background. To eliminate their fear and barriers in language learning, this project develops the module based on student centred approach. Experimental study methods adopted to understand the effectiveness of modules in language learning.

Listening and Speaking

LSRW skills need to focus simultaneously on developing communication skills in any language. Most primary school learning starts with the visual learning method but first language acquisition begin with listening and it results in positive learning. Still, the concept of language “Nature Vs Nurture” is placed at a top of the heated debates among psychologists and language teachers. Researchers like Tavakkoli (2014) discussed the psychological reason behind L1 and L2 learners.

Listening to the language gives a basic idea about that language; learners get an awareness of its structure, tone, rhythm and pattern in pronunciation. At one stage, learner understands the target language from certain cues, which enhances their receptive skill. The early days of language laboratories concentrate on the audio-lingual method for language learning and it provides the materials as an aural input. In recent days, the pattern and method of language learning changes rapidly and its focus and measures of language attainment are at different levels.

Everyone understands the role of listening in developing communication skills but the method adapted to teach listening is pathetic from the beginning. Most of the teachers and students considered the methods that start with listening as outdated. Richards and Rodgers (2001) worried that listening was one of the most neglected skills in second and foreign-language classrooms, especially until the 1960s. Both researchers and language teachers paid more attention to reading and grammar, and listening was not accepted as a significant feature of language learning. The classical methods like the Grammar Translation Method and the Direct Method also failed to give exposure to the role of listening in learning the language.

Mendelson (1994) torches out on the fact and data related to the role of listening in language learning. He emphasised that “of the total time spent on communicating, listening takes up 40-50 %; speaking 25-30 %; reading 11-16 %;

and writing about 9 %”. Peterson (2001) stated that “no other type of language input is easy to process as a spoken language, received through listening ... through listening, learners can build an awareness of the interworking of language systems at various levels and thus establish a base for more fluent productive skills”

The statements on listening skill help to understand their importance and demand in the language learning atmosphere. Based on these kinds of arguments and ideas, this project focuses on the role of effective listening and how it creates an impact or reflects in other skills.

Geographical Location

The geographical location chosen for the study is NGM College, Pollachi, a rural background place that develops swiftly in the business and academic arena. Pollachi is an iconic place in the Coimbatore district, which is known as the education hub of Tamil Nadu, India. Pollachi tops among businesses related to farming and agriculture, it opens up chances for worldwide trade, and it moreover plays a vital role in the media industry because of its scenic beauty.

Pollachi stands at the top in educational growth and is surrounded by prestigious institutions which focus on various streams like Arts, Science, Engineering, Technology, Management, Agriculture and Medical. Admissions in colleges are almost receiving positive numbers and in placements also numbers are increasing, still, the students are failing to excel in communication. A lot of students are struggling to communicate in English, though the ample of job opportunities available with a competitive salary in this location, most of the students fail to grab them because of lack in communication skills. Colleges in Pollachi have a lot of first-generation learners as students and they have to cross the barriers in sociological and psychological aspects.

Population

The sample chosen for this study is first-generation students in selected college of Pollachi. It focuses on the problems among first-generation learners in this particular location. At the initial stage, the study was conducted among a large number of students to understand the problem in detail. Later it focuses on the experimental group to prove the effectiveness of the module

The rationale for the chosen population is first-generation students in Arts and Science College. The sampling method adopted for this study is convenient sampling and purposive sampling under non-probability sampling because of the time constraint.

Methodology

The methodology adopted for this study is qualitative research; it helps to discuss things clearly from various aspects. There are no authentic studies or research on chosen population in this locality, so this study does not frame any hypothesis questions to test among the chosen population. Rather, it explores the problems among the participants and tests the effectiveness of the module through simple percentage analysis.

Phases of the study

1. Pilot Study
2. Data Analysis
3. Experimental Group
4. Pre-Test
5. Module designing
6. Experimental Group/ control group
7. Post- Test
8. Data Analysis

Pilot Study

The pilot study is an effective method to ensure the choice of research tool, avoid ambiguity in future research, and assess the practicality and feasibility of the research. It adds credible strength to the research and gives a clear understanding of chosen population for the study.

This study focuses on a wide variety of populations during the pilot study, apart from the chosen population; it includes school teachers, college professors and employers in the select locality. This particular data helps to design the module effectively from the perspective of employability skills though the primary focus of this study is to enhance the speaking skill among first-generation learners through imparting effective listening strategies.

The pilot study is conducted among 120 students in select colleges, 60 school teachers from neighbourhood schools, 60 professors from colleges and 30 employers in the Pollachi locality. The result and data of the pilot study highlight the need and challenge in enhancing communication skills among chosen population.

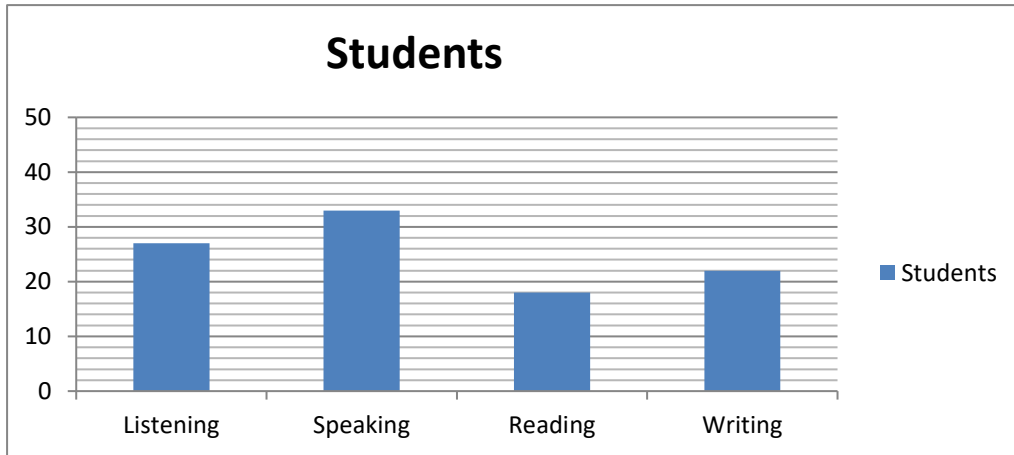


Chart 1

The student chosen for the pilot study stated that speaking is the most challenging task for them in most situations. 33% of the students mentioned speaking as tough, next to speaking, 27% of students worried about their listening skills and they stated that the chance of listening to the target language is very low. Writing and reading stand at 22% and 18% in the next levels. The above data was collected from students using a questionnaire, classroom observation and semi-structured interview.

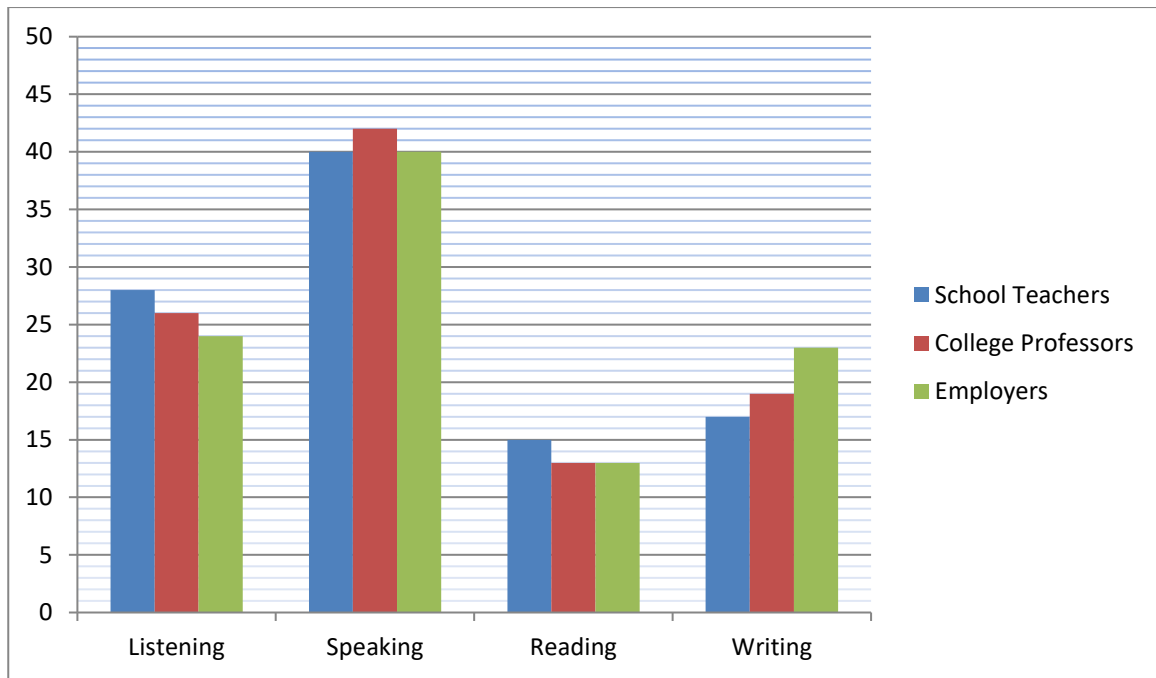


Chart 2 – Opinion of Experts

The above chart depicts how students are lacking in listening and speaking skills. The teachers, professors and employers are as well concerned about the basic communication skill of chosen population. The listening skill among students decreases gradually from their school days, and it reflects in their speaking, it projects the strong relationship between listening and speaking.

According to school teachers, 28% of students are struggling to listen actively in the classroom, and 40% of students hesitate to speak in English with friends or teachers. At the college level, the data remains the same, when it comes to speaking, professors stated that nearly 42% of students are not ready to give presentations or seminars in English when it comes to profession, employers reject around 40% of students because of lack in communication skill, the employers worried about the writing skills of students and they mentioned that 23% of students are not confident enough to draft a simple mail or regular communication letters.

The data from mentioned groups were collected through informal interviews, casual discussions, phone conversations and open-ended questionnaires for detailed analysis. Consolidating the data from the pilot study strengthens the research idea of this study which connects listening and speaking. The above data stands top in listening and speaking,

it helps to identify the issues among the select population and helps to design the modules based on their needs.

Problems identified in pilot study

- Students are not interested to listen for a long time, the span of listening is short
- Students are not interested in listening to the lecture in a monotone, they expect some other digital aids
- Students are not ready to speak in English because of peer pressure and social background
- Students don't have much exposure to the English-speaking atmosphere

Experimental Design

To achieve accuracy, the study narrows down from a larger number to a small number for the experimental stage. The sample size chosen for this experiment purpose is 60. The total number of students was further divided into two with equal sample sizes as a control group and the experimental group. Each control group and experimental group consists of 30 students.

Pre-Test

As a common framework of the research plan, the Pre-Test is conducted for the students. The students are in higher level education, so they students aware of a few concepts related to the test. The objectives of the Pre-Test are not revealed among participants but a few guidelines and instructions were given in general. The pre-Test questionnaire format was designed to assess the basic listening skill among the select population. The assessment result of the pre-test shows there is no difference in the performance of students in the Control Group and Experimental Group. It helps to identify the advanced learner, slow learner and moderate learner in the experimental group.

The 10 minutes conversation (audio format) was played twice in the classroom and asked the students to find out the answer to the given question. Next to that, 15 minutes documentary was played related to communication skills and learning styles in the classroom. The second part of the question encourages students to explain and express their interpretations in detail, the former one is the closed-ended format. The reading comprehension with matching style was also partially adopted for the test but the first two were in

major focus. The total marks for the pre-test comprise for 50 marks.

Module designing

The module consists of ten activities which concentrate to develop listening skills among the chosen sample. Module and its components were taught only to the experimental group, control group participants were getting only the traditional way of teaching. The major ideas were taught to both groups at regular intervals but the experimental group was introduced to modules to enhance their speaking through listening. Each module designed for one-hour session.

List of activities in the designed module are

- Word-hunt
- Listen and Let continue
- Listen and Guess
- Mirror act
- Sing a song
- It's your turn
- Read...Ready...Read
- Search the substitute
- Script a Subtitle
- Master the moment

1. Word Hunt

Name of the Activity – Word Hunt

Type of activity – Individual / group

Duration – 1 hour

Teaching Aid – Audio, Chalk and Talk

The purpose of the activity is to make the students listen to the audio consciously and ask them to pick up the words related to some particular concepts like food, travel, weather, school, cinema and movie.

The student has to pick the maximum word they can do. The length of the audio is limited to 10 minutes for active listening. One of the findings in the pilot study suggested avoiding lengthy conversations.

This activity can be conducted as an individual task or as well a group activity. In the beginning, students are encouraged to form a team but later it focuses on individual performance.

2. Listen and let continue

Name of the Activity – Listen and let continue

Type of activity – Group

Duration – 1 hour

Teaching Aid – Audio, video

The purpose of this activity is to make the participants speak and converse with other participants about their regular activities. The sample audio or video was played in the classroom, in the audio/video paused and asked students to continue to speak on that particular situation. It focuses on both listening and speaking. The students have to listen actively to get details from sample audio, if not the students struggle to continue that conversation.

3. Listen and Guess

Name of the Activity – Listen and guess

Type of activity – Individual

Duration – 1 hour

Teaching Aid – Audio, video

This activity focuses on the creative side of the student as well; the object of this activity is a little bit advanced from the previous two. This is an activity for an individual, the popular short stories, and moral stories were played in the classroom, at one stage the stories were paused and students were asked to guess or predict the next sequences on their own. The students paid good attention to drawing the different unique outputs as result. Students showed interest to find the meaning of new words to understand the story better.

4. Mirror Act

Name of the Activity – Mirror Act

Type of activity – Individual

Duration – 1 hour

Teaching Aid – Audio, Video

This activity focuses on the pronunciation of students, and the audio and video related to pronunciation played in the classroom. Students have to listen and repeat the same style of pronunciation or gestures while communicating. The level of difficulty in words will be moved from simple – medium – hard.

5. Sing a song

Name of the Activity – Sing a song

Type of activity – Individual / Group

Duration – 1 hour

Teaching Aid – Audio, Video

This activity is an advanced level of activity four; here students are expected to sing the song played in the classroom. Each student has to sing 2 lines from that song, at one stage it can be continued as a chorus. The first objective of this activity is to eliminate the factor of being shy from students while speaking a foreign language. It gives some confidence and makes them to practice at least in their comfort zone.

6. It's your turn

Name of the Activity – It's your turn

Type of activity – Individual / Group

Duration – 1 hour

Teaching Aid – Audio, Video

The cinema is a popular tool to teach communication skills in the language classroom. The student can learn pronunciation, phrases, expressions and body language through guided listening and watching the video. In this activity, popular movies like 'Dead Poet Society' was played with subtitles and after some time, the audio will be muted, and the student has to perform the same dialogue. His voice must be matched with that video. A Group of participants were encouraged to form a team based on the situation.

7. Read...Ready...Read

Name of the Activity – It's your turn

Type of activity – Individual / Group

Duration – 1 hour

Teaching Aid – Handout

The activities concentrate on traditional way of teaching and learning methods. This time, handouts were distributed to all the participants. One of the participants has to start reading aloud before the classroom; the student has to point out another participant to read from where the previous participant stops. On a few occasion, the reader itself nominates or call out the name of the next participant. It focuses both on listening and pronunciation.

8. Search the Substitute

Name of the Activity – Search the Substitute

Type of activity – Individual

Duration – 1 hour

Teaching Aid – Handout

Using different vocabularies with the same meaning is a symbol of proficiency in any language. This activity helps the participants to learn the different choices of words with similar meanings. The handout consists of around 100 words, the students have to group the words according to their meaning or expression. Finding out right substitute words will help to find other words with same criteria.

9. Script a Subtitle

Name of the Activity – Script a Subtitle

Type of activity – Individual

Duration – 1 hour

Teaching Aid – Video

From previous activities, students are exposed to enough level of listening to the language in different circumstances. In this activity, the video will be played with audio, but the subtitle of that file would be disabled. The student has to listen carefully and have to write the subtitle for that scene. It helps students to check their proficiency in listening to a foreign language and its accent.

10. Master the moment

Name of the Activity – Master the moment

Type of activity – Individual

Duration – 1 hour

Teaching Aid – Video, Audio, Worksheet

The purpose of this activity is to trace the progress of participants during the intervention time. The students were asked to watch videos of great leaders' speeches or interviews, the worksheets have a list of vocabulary to be used in public speaking. The students have to put themselves in that situation and have to deliver the speech in an extempore style. It helps to check their choice of vocabulary and style of delivering the speech.

Post – Test

After the stipulated time of intervention, the post-test was conducted for both the control group and the experimental group. The experimental group population answers and performances show the implementation of elements from the module. Scores between these groups prove that the module is effective among the chosen population. There is a significant difference in their score on is pre-test and post-test.

Comparison between Pre-Test and Post –Test

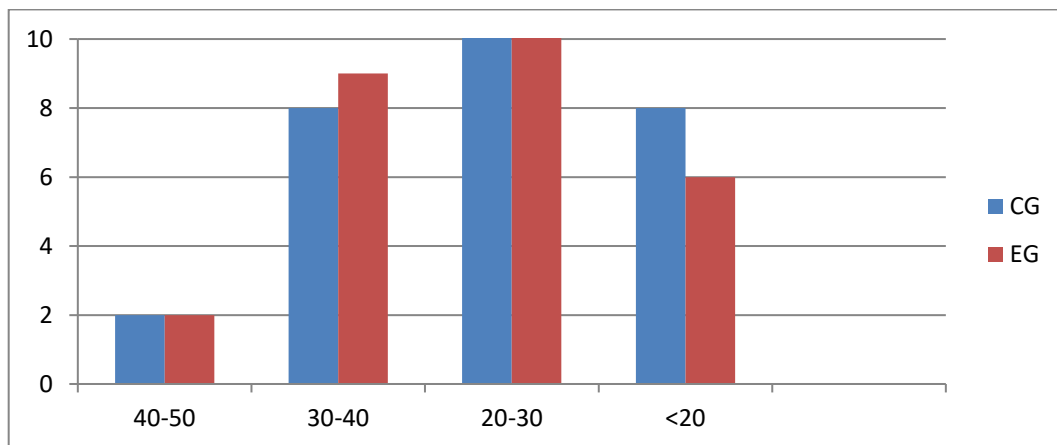


Chart 3- Pre-Test Marks

In the pre-test the scores and performance between the control and experimental group are almost the same, both groups were consists of all three levels of learners. It exhibits that the implementation of the module is not the basis of any biased opinion and it needs to be effective to show the significant difference in post-test score comparison.

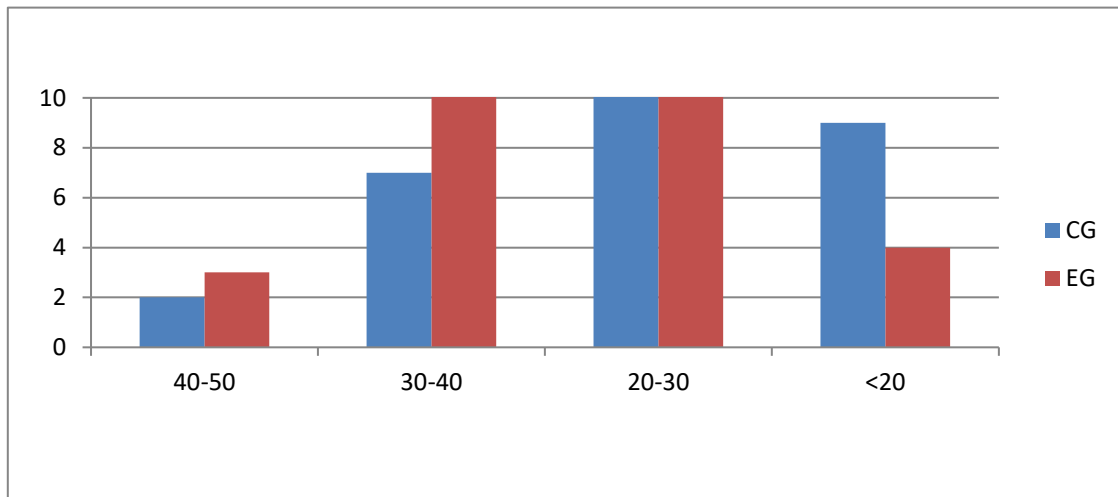


Chart 4 – Post-Test Marks

The post-test marks show a significant difference in the performance of the experiment group population. The students who scored below 20 marks in the pre-test is go down in the experimental group. It reduces from six to three in the count, it evidence that the module is effective even among slow learners and average learners. The numbers between 30-40 marks witness positive growth, and the students who performed well in the intervention period scored above 25 marks. The individual marks of students in the following chart help to understand it better.

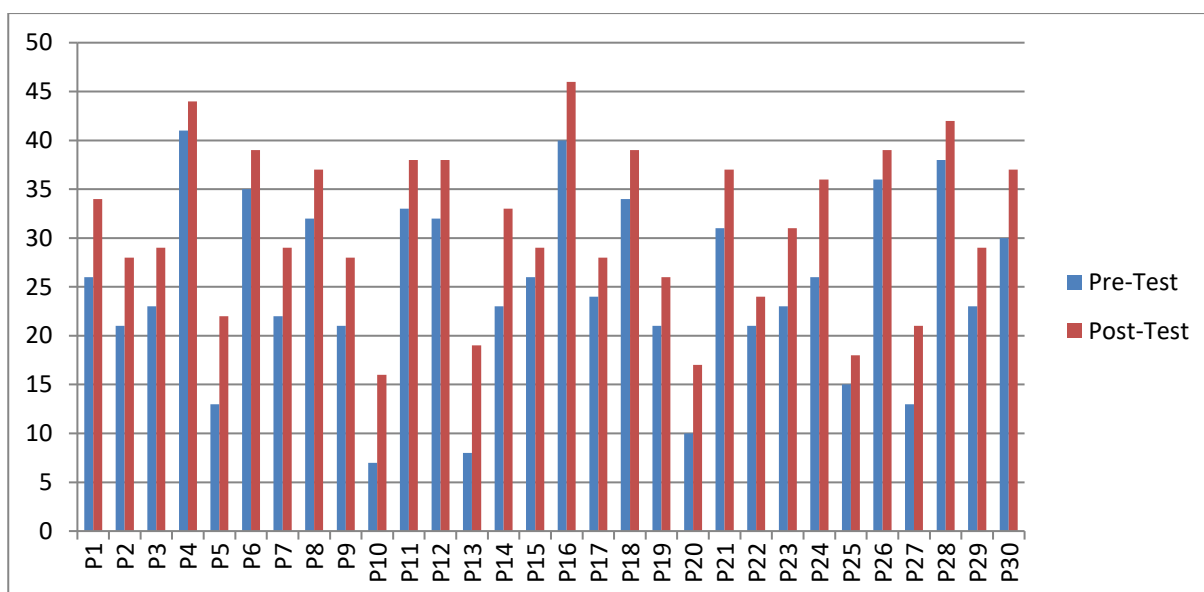


Chart 5 – Comparison of Pre-Test & Post-Test Marks
(Experimental Group)

Marks	Pre-Test	Post -Test
40-50	2	3
30-40	9	12
20-30	13	11
Less than 20	6	4

Table 1- Consolidation of Experimental Group Marks

Outcome of the Module

- The chosen population learnt the choice of vocabulary and implement alternate words according to the situation
- The chosen population develop the concept of listening from the level of basic to comprehensive
- The chosen population understands the importance of pronunciation in speaking
- The chosen population is aware about spellings and intonation for pronouncing a word
- The chosen population interprets the grammatical structures in the text while reading

Inferential findings of the study

- The chosen population shows tremendous growth in the activities conducted in language classrooms

- The chosen population implement the nuances of the art of speaking in their regular communication
- The chosen population eliminates their hesitation to speak in English

Implications of the study

- The findings of the present project can be applied by the teachers and professors in their day-to-day classroom activities
- The module can be adopted from the school level teaching for better implementation
- The findings of this study help to identify the key skills to develop both listening and speaking simultaneously

Limitation of the study

- This research is limited to the selected college in the Pollachi
- The survey and discussions are also based on the perspectives of experts belonging to same locality
- The study focuses only on two skills
- The sample size is limited to 60 students and sampling methods also have their own constraints

Suggestions for further possible exploration

- This study can be used to enhance the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills of the same age group students
- This study can be the primary source to frame the modules which focus on employability skills
- This study can be extended to focus on all four major skills in communication
- The effectiveness of the module can be tested with a different set of population

Conclusion

The detailed analysis of the results of the report highly suggested focusing on interlinked skills. Teachers must be aware of the parallel teaching methodologies to reach the students and create an impact on their learning patterns. Students who belong to colleges in the locality is mostly from a rural background, the colleges should prepare them to meet the expectation of a competitive world. The subjects and

syllabus must have ample time for activities-based teaching with a focus on language enhancement

ANNEXURE

- 1) Feedback from students – Maximum 5 copies (Handwritten –Scanned copy to be attached)
2. Sample of materials – Reading Passage, Word bank, and Screenshots from YouTube videos/movies
3. DVD – Voice recordings of the students.