

# Activities of Listening Skill in Conjunction with Speaking Help Enhancing Language Competence of Engineering Graduates

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**Abstract:** Proficiency in speaking cannot be acquired without effective listening. Listening and speaking skills are deciding factors for academic growth of engineering students. Engineering students are mostly worried about their placement in top notch companies, thereby they keep on emphasizing more on speaking under the presumption that speaking can be acquired without active listening. They treat listening skill as the secondary skill for acquisition of speaking, which requires special attention by the teacher. Productive skill speaking and receptive one listening are invariably playing a pivotal role for human communication. Second language users of English generally get confused with the incompatibility of writing, speech production and aural skill in English. Receptive skill Listening and Productive skill speaking are incompatible to one another. The prime objective of this paper is to find out whether integrated listening and speaking activities help in developing language competence of engineering graduates or the task and activities of listening and speaking should be done in isolation to achieve the competence of the students in English language. The present paper collected data of different tests namely pre-test and

post-test based on different tasks and activities intended for the engineering graduates of an engineering college and the same was analyzed and the result found at the end of the exposition of data revealed that engineering graduates those who practiced activities of listening and speaking in conjunction with one another proved to be successful in acquiring English language competence than the others who practiced the activities of listening and speaking in separation.

**Keywords:** Conjunction, Engineering graduates, Language competence, Listening skill & speaking skill.

## 1. Introduction

Listening skill is a pre-requisite for Speaking. Listening and speaking are two important skills like other skills to communicate (Raimes,1983).[21] One should know skills like listening and speaking normally integrated in real life (Byrne,1991).[3] Out of the four-language skills listening is the first language skill everybody develops. Acquisition of other languages skills depend s o l e l y o n listening comprehension (Feyten,1991).[10] Learning of second language is possible by listening. Listening and speaking are two major components of oral language and it is listening paves the way for speaking. The adage "we have two ears and one mouth" signifies listening is more important than speaking. Listening promotes comprehension of the language as it is cognitive in nature and helps

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interpreting auditory codes appropriately. It is listening which accelerates the process of organized speaking. Listening controls, the process of learning and stimulates speaking. Speaking and listening are reciprocally interdependent oral language processes. In most English as a Second Language classroom setting listening happens to be the only channel for learning which lays emphasis on speaking which are important elements of oral communication. The process of listening is very crucial as it helps building range of vocabularies in utilizing the same in academic debates, seminars and interviews. Listening comprehension is interactive and interpretive in which listeners actively engage themselves in dynamic construction of meaning. Discerning the human speech listeners predict what has to be expressed (Crow,1983; Goss 1982).[6] Implementing micro listening is inevitable for comprehending fast and fluent conversations. The ability to speak well invariably depends on the ability to listen well. Immense care must be taken by teacher to listen well. Immense care must be taken by teacher instructors to create a good classroom environment where students would be getting a chance to have a real-life communication, doing tasks on authentic tasks and activities by promoting oral language. Listening is very much important for to acquire vocabulary, syntax and better pronunciation (Cross1992:244) .[5] Oral and Aural skills can never be dissociated from one another. When we want to learn a new language, we need to communicate in that. Essentially, we have to listen the target language and we have to understand the same and we need to respond in the same language. Listening skill received less importance as believed by language users that it would be developed without assistance. (Osada,2004, p.53).[16] Listening and speaking are normally amalgamated in real life. Integrated activities provide opportunities behavioral interaction for needy students (Lynch,1997).[15] Blended acquisition of these two skills can help in developing the communicative competence of the professionals (Zekiye Müge Tavil,2010).[19] It's opined by various second language researchers that fostering special emphasis on listening instruction at the beginning and intermediate levels of L2 proficiency could be great help to the second language learners of English to enhance their language learning potentials. (Dunkel,1986; Krashen & Terrel, 1983; Nagle & Sanders,1986; Winitz, 1981).[9] Learning a language depends on listening as it provides the aural input which facilitates language acquisition thereby enabling the learners to interact in spoken communication. (Watkins,2005).[20] Active listening

involves the sense of hearing and helps understanding the body language and can empathize with the speaker for transmission of the message and accuracy of its reception. Unless the speaker and the receiver do develop the active listening skill the chance of real communication diminishes (Watkins, 2005)[20] and there can be no language learning leading to no communication. In the process of language acquisition the skills must be taught to the students in right order, so that without any difficulty students can acquire the skills and skills taught to them can help nurturing them to develop their proficiency in communication. Students should understand and able to respond to a new language they are exposed to. Listening does not mean to listen to the content, at the same time the listener must be able to clarify the meaning and react to the speaker in communicative settings. The purpose of listening can be transactional or interactional. In transactional one the focus is on exchange of information where as in interactional one the focus is on using the language for establishing and maintaining social contacts (Anderson & Lynch, 1988:15).[1] Listening comprehension is the consequence of the interpretation of linguistic knowledge, context and general knowledge. In top- down processing Practicing listening creates an avenue for the professional students to develop their communicative competence as it establishes a good platform for successful exchange of dialogues in interpersonal communication. A good writer can be a good reader and so is a good speaker could be a good listener as it correlates with productive and receptive skills. (Bueno, Madrid and McLaren, 2005:344).[2] Teaching target language to the students does not mean to orient them with the rules of grammar but to make them proficient in using the target language in communication. Fluency and comprehensibility of the students could be developed if they are exposed to different settings of communication with an objective to acquire the same by means of practice. Communicative competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately in the process of social interaction. One must see that engineering graduates should be exposed to different integrated activities of oral and aural one , which would enhance their language proficiency. Engaging students in communication activities fosters receiving, understanding and communicating simultaneously. Communication cannot go on if the orator does not understand the piece of information given by the receiver. Proficiency of oral production depends on 4 (four) underlying themes: Approach, Elaboration, Utterance and self-control (Levelt,1989).[13]

Approach relates to basic knowledge which is a prerequisite for speaking cannot be realized without listening. So is the case with formulation, articulation which badly requires exposure to listening without which speech production cannot be done accurately. Competence in communication refers to employ the language efficiently, correctly, appropriate to the context and express justified behavior in socio-cultural context. (Canale & Swain, 1980).[4] It is possible on the part of the student to express, even though they are not taught the listening skill but they may not be able to communicate unless they understand what has been said to them. The degree of interaction is related to the extent that the listener must collaborate with the speaker to maintain the conversation. In conversations the speaker and the listener change roles back and forth. Hence the teachers must teach listening and Speaking skills in amalgamation to enable the students to do the same. Finding the student's level of communicative competence is essential in a communicative setting as it helps in finding as well as improvising the learner's ability in employing expertise in integration. The ability of using the language in integration of tasks and activities of listening and speaking develop language competence of students. The interpretation of skills integrating pertains not only to linguistic skills but also to skills in manipulating information in an integrative manner or notion which includes quasi or similar operation of both language skills and information (Zahedi, 2012).[22]

In day-to-day affairs human being use Listening and Speaking in integration. While teaching to the students in classroom, teacher should see these skills are being taught to them in tandem interestingly with an interactive mode because the students can listen in the target language at the same time, they can speak in that but they won't be able to communicate in the target language because they have not been taught skills of Listening and Speaking in amalgamation. Skills in tandem exposes second language learners of English to real language and help them to communicate and interact effectively and naturally in the target language. Good language instructors help students to develop a set of listening strategies and enable them to match the same to different listening situations (Watkins, 2005). [20] Teachers can create multiple information gap task and activities by engaging language learners to do the activities in acquiring the skill of language competence." When the learners can communicate effectively inside and outside the classroom, the

teaching learning of English becomes successful." (Davies and Pearse, 2000, p.99).[8] Following an integrated approach and rules of communicative approach learners can acquire the language (Fink, 2003; Canal & Swain, 1980).[11]

Keeping the above concept in mind the researcher would like to answer the question, Whether teaching Speaking and Listening skills in amalgamation will help in developing the oral communicative competence of the engineering students.

## 2. Approach

The present study aims in finding out whether the language proficiency of engineering students could be enhanced in imparting Speaking and Listening skills in tandem or teaching the same in isolation. Listening is rarely taught in isolation to the students rather it is taught to the students in conjunction with other language skills like reading, speaking and writing with an objective not only to improve the skill acquisition but also to develop disciplinary knowledge and social development as well. Listening skill in conjunction with Speaking skill involves desegregation of the parts of the language usually segregated. One cannot develop speaking skill unless one develops the listening one. To have successful and effective communication one has to understand what has been said to them.

The research question which could be analyzed for the present study by the researcher is as follows: Could Teaching Listening and Speaking in amalgamation really help in developing the oral language competence of the students? The researcher has taken 50 students of Gandhi Institute of Engineering and Technology University (GIETU), engineering 1st semester as participants for the study. All these students participated in writing a proficiency test in English. The objective of the proficiency test was to measure the mastery of these participants in LSRW skills in English. The question administered for the test was based on their syllabus which they read in the 1st semester of engineering. All these students studied Communicative English and Soft Skills in their 1st semester as one of the compulsory subjects for 100 marks. Then out of these fifty students, twenty-five students started practicing Listening skill and Speaking skill which were taught to them by the teacher separately. Whereas the other twenty-five students were practicing Speaking and Listening skills which were taught to them by the teacher in

amalgamation of both the skills based on information gap activities. Information gap activities has been chosen for the present study as it is a good approach to teach students to develop their proficiency in oral communication.

At the end all the forty participants wrote the same test as posttest.

The mean score is out of 100.

**Table 1 : Demographic Details of the Engineering Graduates**

Total no. of students	Gender		Age	Mean competence test score
	M	F		
Group-1	15	10	18-21	70
Group-2	10	15	18-21	75

The posttest was administered with the students at the end of the semester as they got ample time to rehearse the task and activities. The end test was administered with the students keeping the concept in mind by the researcher that the participants would write the test well because they end up their practices just before the post test. The participants those who have participated for the test were of same level of proficiency to ensure the reliable test result. Different level of proficiencies among the participants could lead to design different task to come to a reliable result.

The post-test was conducted with the communicative task as it was the same content for the pre-test keeping in mind to get reliable and valid test result. The communicative test must evaluate the communicative ability of student judiciously and impartially. To provide an accurate listening proficiency assessment a listening activity should be designed based on real life issues in which students can provide information which they got through listening (Crystal, 2001).[7] The students should demonstrate their potential in the communicative test as they used to do this in the classroom with task and activities. A pilot study was administered with a group of students to confirm the understanding and clarity and reliability of the instruction of the post- test to be administered later on.

The participants attended 6hours of class to perform Listening and Speaking activities for more than a month. Information gap activities were administered to do the listening activities. According

to Krashen (1985) lesser exposure to target language by the students inhibits their level of competence in communicative abilities leading to embarrassment and stress for them.[12] Therefore, teachers should administer real life task with the help of information gap activities to boost the confidence and motivation level of the students. Conversations in social setting normally do not focus on the grammatical accuracy by the interlocutor as the meaning is understood without impeding the flow of communication. In classroom setting correcting the students by providing feedback to their errors disturbs their level of enthusiasm in carrying out the assigned activities actively. In the present study enough, care has been taken not to correct students intermittently unless there is something seriously wrong with the meaning to decipher by the teacher so as to promote the communicative competence of the students in amalgamating the skills in practice. The task given to the first group was focusing on Listening and Speaking in isolation where as the task given to the second group was an amalgamation of Speaking and listening skills.

The participants carried out the information gap task and activities with amalgamation and with isolation It shows the adaptability of the students to carry out tasks in different mode. Later on a higher version of the complex task was arranged for the students to perform. Basically, students do not show their interest in carrying out task and activities on speaking and listening as it is very complex activities for them to perform. Thus, they show their disinterestedness in carrying out such task. The teacher has to play a pivotal role in creating a conducive environment by motivating the students to perform such activities with more enthusiasm and interest. The teacher has to play a friendly role in facilitating students by providing necessary support and creating a learning environment to perform such tasks. Initially students showed their disinterest in carrying out the task but afterwards they show their interest and enthusiasm in doing the information gap activities as it is quite autonomous in nature and student could really exchange sentences and talk to one another in deducing the information. Such information gap activities do not help only to acquire Listening and Speaking skills rather it focuses more on different sub skills of listening like- Listening to understand the main theme, Listening for the gist, Listening for critical thinking, predicting etc (Lindsay & Knight, 2006:46).[14] According to Underhill, these kinds of tasks have the advantage that they

produce concrete evidence of communicative competence.[17] Therefore, doing Aural and Oral tasks and activities in integration help raising the skill of oral competence of the student can never be undermined.

### 3. Findings

Amalgamation of Listening skill with Speaking improves oral communicative competence of the students. It is listening that helps in forming good base for developing better oral productive skills. With the information gap activities, the researcher engaged the participant in fruitful conversation in conjunction with listening and their result in oral production differ considerably which is shown below.

**Table 3 : Source: Author's Own Calculation**

Group	1 <sup>st</sup> week	2 <sup>nd</sup> week	3 <sup>rd</sup> week	4 <sup>th</sup> week	Average score
	High est score	High est score	High est score	High est score	
Gro up-1	95/10	100/152	105/155	107/158	66.178
Gro up-2	100/151	105/153	107/155	111/158	68.557

The data shown in table-2 is the participation percentage of students during the study. It has been calculated taking the total number of active participants in the group actively participated in the assigned activities divided by total number of students in the group. Based on the data given above we can reach to a conclusion that participation of participants in group-2 is higher than that of participation of participants in group-1.

Analyzing the total number of correct answers in the above table, it is clearly evident that the number of correct answers and the highest score has been generated by Group-2 comparing to Group -1. The analysis of the data reveals that blending Listening skill with that of Speaking helps developing the oral competence of the second language learners of English which has been reflected in Group-2. Exploring the use of specific to general and general to the specific strategies of Listening skills aids learners to expand the knowledge in acquiring good amount of vocabulary, fundamental knowledge in grammar and

usage and engage them in productive conversation. The listening skill can be taught to students by Teachers in evolving a pattern i.e. Pre- listening, Listening and Post-listening(Bueno, Madrid & McLaren).[2] The process of listening that is Pre-listening, while- listening and post-listening of Listening task and activities help the participants in widening the background knowledge and in connecting the old knowledge with the new one and developing the confidence level of the students in participating dialogue generating and exchanging process.

In real life listening, top-down and bottom-up strategies of listening functions at a time to help speaker for effective oral production. Group-2 received the data and decode it appropriately which enabled them for exchange of dialogues. It is pre-listening, while listening and post-listening activities help Group-2 participants in decoding the content and develop accurate prediction of creating suitable dialogues and help in developing their level of confidence in extending their conversation skills. It is confirmed that the task and activities carried out by Group-2 participants in pre-listening, while- listening and post-listening activities help them to develop their oral competence. Listening triggers acquisition of new language and helps in extending the learning opportunities for the target language.

Listening activities like information gap one helped Group-2 participants in improving their fluency, accuracy and linguistic competence and in turn they could engage themselves in meaningful communication. Language development is possible when language learners notice features of new input and instill the same into their mind with the existing language. Exposure to new input of language helps learners in developing the oral skills of participants. As Group -1 did not participate and practice well in the information-gap activities, they could not come across new language input and that lead to restrict their language competence in terms of oral fluency. Lack of exposure to comprehensible language input by the Group-1 could not fine tune their verbal ability as could not process the information to be interpreted as dialogues which impede their oral competence. Therefore, listening to information-gap activities and practicing the Listening skill with the Speaking skill in tandem can help participants to engage themselves in meaningful conversation and that in turn will help improving their oral communicative competence.[18]

#### 4. Conclusion

The existing study was carried out to find out amalgamation of listening and speaking activities help developing the oral competence of the second language learners of English. Aural and oral skill in amalgamation really helps in developing the oral competence of the students. Students show their interest in doing listening and speaking skill task in integration that helped in improving their oral competence which we witnessed in Group-2. Exposure to language input by means of listening skill is an essential ingredient for not only engaging students in meaningful conversation but also help them in developing their oral competence. The four macro skills if taught in separation would be less productive than integrated instruction because communication does not happen taking discrete language skills into account. Integrated activities which involve both the aspects of oracy and literacy can help developing proficiency of engineering students. Thus, it is quite evident from the above study that practicing Listening skill with Speaking can really help learners developing their oral competence than that of practicing the language skills in isolation. Listening is a receptive skill in which listener receives a message from speaker, but it does not mean the listener will remain passive throughout the listening activity. Listening is a very active process, where the listener has to listen to the speaker actively to respond and to continue the conversation. Further research is advised to validate the above study by increasing the total number of students for larger contexts and extending the time period to have good insights of advocating the use of integrated listening and speaking activities in developing the oral competence of the students.

#### 5. Limitations Of The Study

The sample for the present study is limited. The larger sample can help validating better and accurate results. More number of participants can be involved in the test which in turn help the researcher getting more data and time for the research can be extended by which multiple rounds of data analysis can be made to validate the result leading to a conclusion.

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