Reporting on Club Activities as an Effective Strategy to Enhance the Speaking Skills of ESL Learners in Engineering Colleges with a Special Focus on Vernacular Medium Students: A Study at Chennai Institute of Technology, Chennai, South India

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***Abstract*—One of the most urgent issues concerning the English as a Second Language (ESL) pedagogy in the modern higher education in India is the development of oral communicative competence among the Engineering students that have been taught through the vernacular media. This combined research undertaking explores the effectiveness of a structured club-activity-based reporting system as a teaching approach to improve speaking proficiency of 120 first-year Engineering students in Chennai Institute of technology (CIT), Chennai, South India, during two academic semesters. It builds upon a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test control group design and is based on a set of principles of Vernacular medium learning, namely, Vygotsky Zone of Proximal Development, Krashen, Input Hypothesis, and the principles of Communicative Language Teaching, which involves exploring how guided oral reporting activities in which students report on specific topics, facilitated by an institutional club, can provide authentic, low-anxiety communicative situations. The quantitative data were collected using the standardised speaking rubrics to assess the pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, coherence, and communicative confidence. The qualitative data gathered were based on semi-structured interviews, reflective journals, and classroom observation guidelines. The outcomes demonstrate significantly better improvements ($p < .001$) in all six speaking sub-skills in the experimental group, the most significant gains are in communicative confidence ($D = 2.1$) and fluency ($D = 1.5$). Affective gains, such as decreased foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA) and increased motivation were also distinctive. The research paper adds to the accumulating collection of research into resource-based and context-based teaching of English as a second language (TBLT), extracurricular English learning, and the pedagogical promise of community-based real-world tasks in South Asian-based engineering education**

***Index Terms*—ESL speaking skills, vernacular medium students, club-based reporting, Engineering English, communicative language teaching, task-based language teaching, foreign language speaking anxiety, Chennai Institute of Technology**

I. INTRODUCTION

The globalised nature of the twenty-first century has imposed communicative burdens on those graduates of technical institutions of higher learning like in India, which are in a language differentiating emerging economies, like never before. Programmes in engineering in Indian universities have continued to deliver graduates with solid theoretical underpinnings in their major fields but there is a noted and well-known lack of English oral communication skills that has continued to derail their career paths, diminish their competitive advantage in multinationals, and compromise their ability to engage effectively in academic discourse (Annamalai and Jayakumar, 2019; Canagarajan, 2006; Graddol, 2006). The paradox is particularly severe in the example of students with the background of vernacular medium school, which makes up the bulk of undergraduate population of

engineering in the state of Tamil Nadu, and throughout South India. Students studying through the vernacular medium- here meaning students whose pre-collegiate formal schooling has been through a regional language (Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, or Kannada) have an even more complex challenge upon joining English-medium higher education institutions.

They have to do it at the same time as getting disciplinary knowledge that is subject specific, and deal with the sociolinguistic needs of a new academic register, as well as obtain adequate oral mastery of the English language to engage effectively in classroom discourse, seminars, presentations, viva voces, interviews, and communication at the workplace (Anandan and Sitharthan, 2021; Krishnamurthy, 2017). The historical pedagogical practices of Grammar-Translation and lecture-based teaching, which have hitherto predominated English language teaching (ELT) in Indian engineering colleges, have been found to be insufficient in the formation of the interactional, spontaneous and contextually embedded oral competence of the students (Chand, 2009; Rajagopalan, 2004). It is in this context that an accumulating literature of research in the TBLT and CLT traditions has revealed that purposeful, real-world-grounded communication activities are much more effective than form-based decontextualised activity in facilitating the development of speaking (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004; Willis and Willis, 2007). Student clubs sponsored by the institution, and in particular, extracurricular activities, offer a pedagogically promising but unexplored venue of genuine language use. The range of domains covered by student clubs at Chennai Institute of Technology (CIT) is subtly diverse, including robotics, coding, and data science in addition to theater, debate, and cultural arts, mental health advocacy, and social media management, which can be traced through a staggering array of communicative genres, registers, and purposes that closely reflect the real-life oral work that engineers and professionals find themselves engaged in throughout their careers.

The paper presents and discusses an organized intervention where ESL learners are specifically trained to provide reports about the club activities to their classmates and teachers in English, where the normal institutional engagement is turned into the supported oral language learning experiences. The reporting structure is based on the real experiences, real audiences, and real purposes three essential criteria of communicative authenticity as theorised by van Lier (1996), Gilmore (2007), and Widdowson (1998) as the basic requirements of meaningful first and second language acquisition in classrooms. The value of the research is multi-layered. First, it addresses a reported institutional requirement in CIT whereby, a consistent pattern of incoming first-year students indicates that more than 68 percent rate below B1 on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) speaking descriptors (Institutional ELT Report, CIT, 2022). Second, it adds methodologically through operationalisation of club-based oral reporting as a repeatable teaching strategy that can be emulated in the Indian engineering college sector. Third, it contributes to the theoretically underestimated topic of intersection between extracurricular language learning and formal ESL instruction in South Asian higher education settings. The questions that this research will use are as follows: How effective is oral reporting which is organized in terms of club-activity based to enhance the speaking skills (pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, coherence, and communicative confidence) in vernacular medium ESL students in CIT? What is the role of club-activity reporting on the oral communicative competence and the motivation to learn English in vernacular medium students? What do you feel are the best features of the club-based reporting system to minimize the foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA) in engineering students? What types of student clubs produce the greatest levels of learner engagement and speaking achievement in reporting task situation?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Speaking Skills in ESL Contexts: Theoretical Underpinnings

This essay addresses speaking skills in ESL scenarios, and incorporates the theoretical basis of this topic. Talking is generally considered the most multidimensional and complicated of the four language skills, which involves concomitantly coordinated cognitive, linguistic, pragmatic and affective processes (Thornbury, 2005; Burns and Joyce, 1997). The dominant model of speech

production developed by Levelt (1989) assumes that to speak fluently one has to activate a conceptualiser (generation of the message), a formulator (grammatical and phonological encoding) and an articulator (motor output) a tripartite process that is much more taxing in the second language, where the three modules have not yet been mastered.

In the case of vernacular medium ESL learners in India, cross-linguistic transfer in L1 prosodic and phonological systems, L2 lexical inaccessibility, and affective anxiety levels are the challenge (Shumin, 1997; Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986). As a response to grammatical competence, Communicative language teaching (CLT) This method of language teaching was originally proposed by Wilkins (1976) and then developed by Canale and Swain (1980), Widdowson (1978), and Littlewood (1981): Communicative competence, which is the combination of the individual ability to use language appropriately, accurately, and fluently in real social situations. In CLT, interaction is not just placed as a result of language learning, however, as a means of how acquisition takes place (Long, 1996; Gass and Mackey, 2007). The interactionist hypothesis is that negotiation of meaning during conversational interactions gives learners focus, timely input that is specific to their stage of development thus expedites the acquisition process. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is an operationalisation of CLT principles, where the principles are put into practice with pedagogical based tasks that have real world analogues and have produced a mass of empirical literature that supports its effectiveness in the development of speaking proficiency (Ellis, 2003; Skehan, 1998; Robinson, 2001). Goal-oriented tasks with definite outcomes and involve meaningful communication have been proven to cause better language production (especially fluency and lexical variety) than those involving controlled practice exercises (Foster and Skehan, 1996; Bygate, 2001). In the sense in which the notion of club-activity reporting is conceptualised in the current paper, it is a task in this specific sense: it has a defined communicative objective, a visible audience, a source of information in the real-world, and quantifiable results.

The sociocultural theory by Vygotsky (1978), and the theory, in particular, of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) also forms another theoretical cornerstone of the given intervention. In the ZPD, learners can do a lot with the help of more competent people than they can do on their own. Under the club-based system of reporting expanse, peers, club mentors and the language instructor are all a part of a scaffold inside of which the vernacular medium learners can internalise, over time, the linguistic and discursive resources needed to perform fluently in oral delivery. The scaffolding role is especially significant at the beginning of the intervention when the L2 confidence and the automaticity of students are at their initial stage.

2.2 Vernacular Medium Students and English Oral Proficiency: The Indian Context

A significant linguistic duality is a defining feature of the higher education system in India: although a vast majority of higher education institutions in the country offer their programmes in English as the official language, most of the students that join these institutions have been taught the local first language throughout the entire duration of their school education (Pattanayak, 1990; Mohanty, 2006). A Tamil Nadu is a case in point, especially. By the 2021-22 school year, about 74% of school enrolment in Tamil Nadu was in Tamil-medium schools (DISE Report, 2022), which implies that most students who join engineering colleges in the English medium have little experience in hearing spoken English in class. The language and psychosocial outcomes of this change are well-known. According to Muthu (2015), Tamil-medium students of Engineering demonstrated much more communication apprehension and lower self-efficacy beliefs in speaking in English and more active code-switching with Tamil in classroom settings than English-medium students.

According to Subramanian and Venkataraman (2018), 72 percent of first-year students studying by means of vernacular in an engineering college in Coimbatore did not participate voluntarily during the oral session in English classes because they had fear of ridicule and of disapproval by classmates. Krishnaswamy and Burde (1998) theorised this avoidance pattern as a linguistic exile - a situation where the learners are expected to both use and be out of the majority language in both academic and professional life. More importantly, these issues are not indicative of cognitive or intellectual strength but they are the result

of the structural disparities in access to and access to language education. A number of intervention studies have shown that speaking growth of vernacular medium students can be fast and maintained in case these students are given supportive, low-stakes, meaningful communicative meaning (Anandan and Sitharthan, 2021; Kannan, 2009; Padmanabhan, 2016). The above findings have emphasized the need to create instructional environments that minimize affective barriers and at the same time offer authentic opportunities to give communicative input and output.

2.3 Extracurricular Activities and Language Learning

The connection between extracurricular involvement and language acquisition has been speculated on depending on a number of views. It has been argued that informal learning environments, where the learning process is voluntary, not driven by extrinsic motivation, and less prone to evaluation, offer language acquisition in a distinctively fruitful environment (Benson, 2011; Pickard, 1996; Richards, 2015). Both Insight Hypothesis and Affective Filter Hypothesis by Krashen (1982) accept the argument that acquisition is optimised under the conditions of low-anxiety comprehensible input-a condition that is exactly what well-planned extracurricular activities can provide. Positive relationships have been reported in empirical studies on the relationship between extracurricular language exposure and speaking development in various educational settings. In a study of students in a Hong Kong university, Sung (2015) determined that the effects of attending English-language clubs was a better predictor of self-reported oral proficiency compared to in-class teaching hours. Investigating the population of ESL learners in Malaysia, Zheng and Samuel (2019) stated that students attending clubs of debating and oral speaking showed significantly better results in oral proficiency examinations compared to the students who did not attend these clubs.

Padmanabhan (2016) reported systematic speaking improvements in a sample of engineering students who were engaged in English club activities in one of the colleges in Puducherry in the Indian context, which he ascribed to a combination of such factors as repeated exposure, peer feedback, and genuine audience engagement. Nevertheless, the majority of the current research addresses extracurricular language activities as a type of supplementary to the formal teaching, and mostly self-managed. Not many have reviewed systematic interventions whereby extracurricular club use is strategically combined with formal language pedagogy using the task-based reporting systems. The research paper completes that gap by operationalising a single instructional protocol, namely, club-activity reporting, connecting extracurricular experience and formal academic speaking development.

2.4 Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) and the Engineering College Context

One of the most solidly described affective barriers to second language oral development is Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA), which is a very specific set of self-conceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours occurring as a result of the language learning peculiarities, as defined by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986). A taxonomy of anxiety causes in language learning provided by Young (1991) established six categories that are applied to the classroom setting; personal and interpersonal anxiety, beliefs held by learners, beliefs held by teachers, instructor-learner interactions, classroom practices and language testing. All of these sources exist in the engineering college ELT setting, where the high student numbers, student group evaluation, and test-based assessment are expected to be anxiety-inducing as well. The authors revealed that MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) showed that the effect of anxiety was found at all three stages of language processing, namely input, processing, and the output and its effects were the strongest in the output stage that is the part of the language processing that is most likely involved in the performance of speaking.

Tsui (1996) has found that silence and non-participation are both not unusual reactions to speaking anxiety in Asian EFL classrooms, and repeated in the Indian engineering college setting (Krishnamurthy, 2017; Padmanabhan, 2016). The successful interventions that have been used to reduce FLSA generally appear to have a few common characteristics: they offer non-threatening, familiar and personally relevant communicative contexts; they involve peer instruction to dispense the evaluative strain; they enable repetitive practice and revision of oral performance; and they foster metacognitive

awareness of anxiety management skills (Price, 1991; Arnold, 1999; Dornyei, 2001). All of these are included in club-activity reporting: the subject matter is based on the lived extracurricular experiences of the students, preparation and rehearsal of the reporting format are possible, peer audiences bring a supportive and not adversarial evaluative dynamic, and semester-long repetition enables gradual internalisation of anxiety management techniques to be applied.

2.5 Related Studies and Research Gap

The critical examination of the literature demonstrates some convergent lines of investigation that, at the same time, can contribute to the theoretical and pedagogical assumptions of the current research, as well as, a substantial gap in the research that can be filled by this study. There has been a theoretical and empirical argument in favor of instruction of task-based speaking, as has been demonstrated by Nunan (2004), Ellis (2003), and Loschky and Bley-Vroman (1993). The affective landscape of the development of the second language speaking is outlined in studies carried out by Horwitz et al. (1986), MacIntyre and Gardner (1994), and Young (1991). Anandan and Sitharthan (2021), Muthu (2015), and Subramanian and Venkataraman (2018) have studied the distinctive issues of the vernacular medium students of Indian engineering colleges. Nevertheless, to the best of the researchers knowledge, no published research has investigated the particular pedagogical prospect of institutionally integrated club-activity reporting as a model in the acquisition of speaking skills among vernacular medium engineering students in South India.

This is a major gap, as the existence of student clubs is pervasive in Indian engineering colleges, that their practices create exactly the type of natural communicative situations that TBLT theorists promote, and that the sociolinguistic and affective issues of vernacular medium students in such institutions are not properly managed by general ELT pedagogies.

III. INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT: CHENNAI INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND ITS CLUB ECOSYSTEM

3.1 Profile of Chennai Institute of Technology

Chennai Institute of Technology (CIT), is an autonomous engineering college, which is a constituent of Anna University, is situated in Kundrathur, Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The institution was founded in 2010 and now has around 5000 undergraduate and postgraduate students in its fifteen departments, which include Computer Science and engineering, Electronics and Communication, Mechanical, Civil, Electrical, Artificial Intelligence and Data science and Information Technology, among others. Student body was majorly made up of first generation college goers of Tamil-speaking schooling and a large percentage of students were attracted to the student body originating in the rural and semi-urban areas of Tamil Nadu.

English language teaching (ELT) programme at CIT is offered under the Department of English and offers mandatory courses in English communication skills in all first-year and second-year engineering programmes. These lessons will be structured such that they cultivate reading, writing, listening and speaking skills according to the CEFR model with the oral communicative competence being the main priority due to its immediate significance when it comes to professional and academic achievement. In the last few years, the department has been dabbling with the new pedagogical practices that can help close the longstanding gap between institutional language acquisition and real-world communicative requirements of its graduates.

3.2 The Club Ecosystem at CIT

The educational ecosystem of student clubs is one of the most peculiar aspects of CIT, as sixty clubs are counted there as of the 2023-24 academic year. These are extremely diverse clubs covering a great variety of fields and interests, including the highly technical clubs of the Robotics and AI Club, the Coding Club, the Automation Club, the Data Science and Analytics Club, the Cyber Security Club, and the AR/VR Club, and the arts and humanities clubs such as the Literary Club, the Theater Club, the Visual Arts Club, the Photography Club, and the Film and Media Appreciation Club and the social impact clubs of the Community Outreach Club, the Disaster Relief Club, the NSS Club, the NCC Club, the Red R This is a pedagogical diversity. The clubs establish a unique communicative space, a particular area of expertise, a

set of vocabulary, a certain type of oral speech, which students can participate in as they take part in club activities.

Asking students to report on these activities in English means that they are at the same time expected to be able to utilize content knowledge on their particular domain, negotiate the language requirements of oral reporting, and address an audience that does not necessarily have the same background knowledge about the domain as the student. This is a multi-layered communicative challenge which gives exactly the type of differentiated input and output that TBLT theorists claim is most generative of language development. A more detailed taxonomy of all sixty clubs at CIT is presented in Table 1, according to the thematic category, with information on the nature of the activity and its particular potential to develop oral language.

Table 1: Taxonomy of Student Clubs at Chennai Institute of Technology by Category and Language Development Potential

S.No.	Club Name	Primary Activity Domain	Language Development Potential
1	Campus TV Club	Video production, broadcast journalism	News reporting, scripted narration, interviewing
2	Literary Club	Reading, writing, literary analysis	Oral book reports, author talks, literary discussions
3	Cultural Club	Cultural events, heritage activities	Descriptive reporting, cultural narration
4	Environment Club	Environmental awareness, campaigns	Persuasive speaking, campaign reporting
5	Fun Club	Recreational and social events	Informal narration, entertainment reporting
6	Campus Affairs Club	Campus governance, student welfare	Formal reporting, procedural language
7	Coding Club	Programming, hackathons, tech talks	Technical presentations, project demos
8	Higher Education Club	Awareness on PG & PhD opportunities	Informational talks, expert reporting
9	Project Club	Engineering mini-projects	Project reporting, problem-solving narration
10	Automation Club	Robotics, IoT, automation systems	Technical reporting, demo commentary
11	Student Ambassador Club	Institutional representation, outreach	Public speaking, formal addresses
12	Community Outreach Club	Social service, village adoption	Narrative reporting, community storytelling
13	Start-up Club	Entrepreneurship, product ideation	Pitch presentations, business communication
14	Toastmasters Club	Public speaking, leadership	Structured speeches, evaluations, Table Topics

S.No.	Club Name	Primary Activity Domain	Language Development Potential
15	Girl Talk Club	Gender awareness, women empowerment	Advocacy speaking, panel discussions
16	Innovators' Club	Design thinking, innovation challenges	Ideation pitches, process reporting
17	Photography Club	Photography, visual storytelling	Photo essays, exhibit narration
18	Recycling Club	Upcycling, sustainability projects	Environmental advocacy, project reports
19	Corporate Affairs Club	Industry interface, corporate events	Business communication, formal presentations
20	Social Media Club	Content creation, digital campaigns	Script writing, vlog narration, media reports
21	MUN Club	Diplomatic simulations, policy debates	Formal speeches, resolution presentations
22	Campus FM Club	Radio broadcasting, podcasting	Spoken word, radio scripting, voice delivery
23	Placement Club	Interview preparation, career skills	Mock interviews, group discussions, pitches
24	Disaster Relief Club	Emergency response, first aid training	Procedural instructions, campaign advocacy
25	Students Welfare Club	Student rights, welfare programmes	Advocacy, committee reports
26	Mental Health Club	Counselling, mental well-being awareness	Sensitive communication, awareness talks
27	Travel Club	Travel and cultural exposure	Travel narratives, destination reporting
28	Youth Club	Youth leadership, social initiatives	Leadership speeches, event reports
29	Lion's Club (Students Chapter)	Service projects, community work	Service reports, gratitude speeches
30	Techie Club (Newton's Club)	Science experiments, tech quizzes	Scientific explanation, demonstration
31	Theater Club	Drama, role-play, performance	Script reading, improvisation, dialogue
32	Debate Club	Competitive debating, argumentation	Structured argumentation, rebuttal, persuasion
33	Sports Club	Sports events, fitness activities	Commentating, sports reporting
34	Alumni Club	Alumni networking, mentoring	Interview-style interaction, narrative reporting

S.No.	Club Name	Primary Activity Domain	Language Development Potential
35	Foreign Language Club	Learning French, German, Japanese etc.	Multilingual competence, translation commentary
36	Visual Arts Club	Painting, sculpture, design	Art critique, exhibit narration
37	Fitness Club	Health, yoga, exercise routines	Instructional language, health reporting
38	NSS Club	National Service Scheme activities	Service reporting, event chronicles
39	NCC Club	National Cadet Corps training	Military register, formal briefings
40	Rotaract Club	Rotary International service	Project proposals, service narratives
41	Red Ribbon Club	HIV/AIDS awareness, health campaigns	Health communication, awareness talks
42	Career Guidance Club	Career counselling, competitive exams	Advisory communication, mock talks
43	Research & Publication Club	Academic writing, research methodology	Academic presentation, paper summaries
44	Robotics & AI Club	Robotics builds, AI projects	Technical demos, engineering communication
45	Cyber Security Club	Ethical hacking, CTF challenges	Technical briefings, security awareness talks
46	Data Science Club	Data analytics, ML projects	Data storytelling, project presentations
47	EDC	Entrepreneurship development	Business pitching, startup narratives
48	Film & Media Club	Film appreciation, critique	Film reviews, panel discussions
49	Yoga & Wellness Club	Yoga, mindfulness sessions	Instructional speaking, wellness narration
50	E-Governance Club	Digital literacy, e-services awareness	Informational talks, digital advocacy
51	Astronomy Club	Stargazing, space science	Explanatory speaking, science narration
52	Tarot Reading Club	Tarot, symbolism, intuitive arts	Interpretive narration, storytelling
53	Game Development Club	Game design, coding games	Game pitches, development reports
54	AR/VR Club	Augmented and virtual reality projects	Technology demos, immersive narration
55	Film Club	Filmmaking, short films	Director's commentary, script narration
56	Astronomy & Space Club	Space exploration, astrophysics outreach	Scientific explanation, quiz narration

S.No.	Club Name	Primary Activity Domain	Language Development Potential
57	Sustainability Club	Green initiatives, eco-awareness	Persuasive environmental speaking
58	Fun Fiesta Club	Entertainment, fun events	Event emceeing, informal reporting
59	Music Club	Music performance, theory	Music commentary, concert narration
60	Culinary & Food Culture Club	Cooking, food heritage exploration	Descriptive narration, cultural reporting

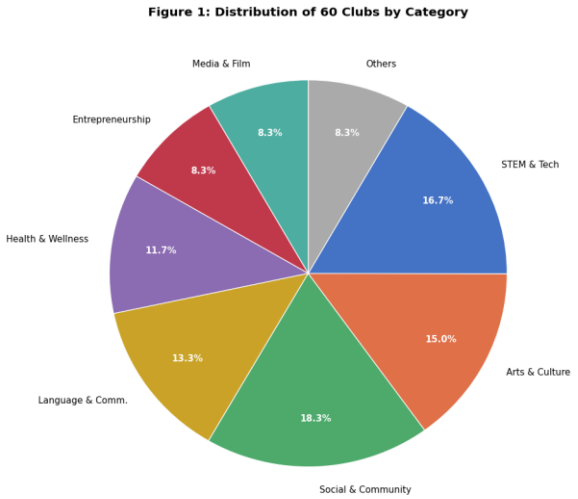

Figure 1: Distribution of 60 Student Clubs at CIT by Thematic Category

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

This paper will utilize a mixed-methods research design, which is a quantitative quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test control design that will involve a post-test and pre-test and will make use of qualitative data collection based on semi-structured interviews, reflective learner journals, and structured classroom observation protocols. The mixed-methods technique is suitable due to the two-fold aim of the study to measure statistically significant differences in the speaking skill scores (quantitative) as well as shed light on the experiential, perceptual, and affective aspects of the engagement of the learners with the club-reporting intervention (qualitative). This design fits concurrent triangulation strategy outlined by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) where quantitative and qualitative data is gathered at the same time and combined in the analysis process to obtain a more detailed picture of the phenomenon being studied.

4.2 Participants

The sample used in the study has 120 first-year B.E./B.Tech. students enrolled in the mandatory course on English Communication Skills at CIT in the 2022-23 academic year. The participants were selected based on four sections and randomly selected into an experimental (n = 60) and a control group (n = 60), random assignment was done at the section level and a stratified process was followed to achieve the comparability of the key demographic variables such as gender, school medium, and department. The respondents had all attended vernacular schools (Tamil, Telugu or Malayalam). The study received ethical approval by the CIT Institutional Ethics Committee and informed written consent was taken by all the participants. Table 2 is a demographic profile of the participants.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Research Participants

Variable	Experimental Group (n=60)	Control Group (n=60)
Gender: Male	36 (60%)	34 (57%)
Gender: Female	24 (40%)	26 (43%)
School Medium: Tamil	42 (70%)	43 (72%)
School Medium: Telugu	11 (18%)	10 (17%)
School Medium: Malayalam	7 (12%)	7 (11%)

Variable	Experimental Group (n=60)	Control Group (n=60)
First-generation college students	48 (80%)	47 (78%)
Mean Age (years)	18.3 (SD=0.6)	18.4 (SD=0.7)
Pre-test CEFR Level: A1	21 (35%)	22 (37%)
Pre-test CEFR Level: A2	30 (50%)	29 (48%)
Pre-test CEFR Level: B1	9 (15%)	9 (15%)

Figure 2: Distribution of Students by School Medium

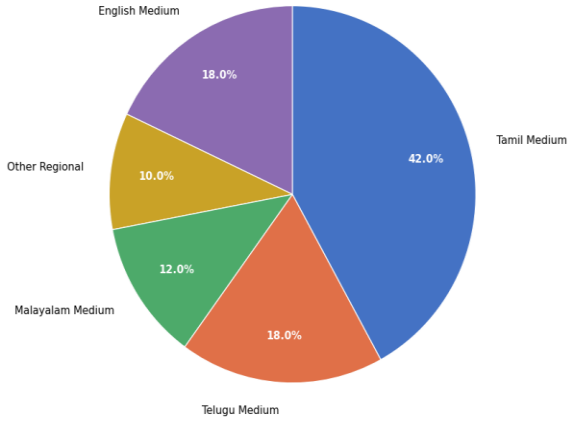

Figure 2: Distribution of Participants by School Medium Background

4.3 The Club-Based Reporting Intervention

The experimental intervention, which targeted the application of three interconnected parts, was applied to the experimental group during two academic semesters (32 instructional weeks): (a) a protocol of a structured club-reporting preparation, (b) oral reporting sessions in the English classroom every week, and (c) a peer evaluation and reflective feedback loop. All sixty clubs of CIT were allocated to students of the experimental group, and two or more students in each group had the responsibility of reporting activities about their club activities throughout the academic year. The formal English class period was set as the time to have the reporting sessions every fortnightly, and the informal practice with the use of club WhatsApp groups and the voluntary speaking circles was to be promoted. The preparation program enforced the students participate in at least one club activity every two weeks, report their activities and observations in a formatted reporting template (including the purpose of the activity, process, results and their personal impressions on the experience), and create a three to five minutes oral reporting, which they would deliver to their classroom.

The scaffolding was planned in three steps: Phase 1 (weeks 1-8), the students had sentence frames, vocabulary lists and worked examples which were to be used; Phase 2 (weeks 9-20), the scaffolding was somewhat reduced and students were expected to create their own reporting structures; Phase 3 (weeks 21-32) students were expected to write without any scaffolds and answer to the questions of the audience. The peer evaluation had utilized a structured speaking rubric (Table 3) that was created by consulting the literature on speaking assessment (Luoma, 2004; Fulcher, 2003) and tested in a pilot study involving 20 students during the semester before the actual study. Two trained assessors rated all oral reports independently; inter-rater reliability was determined by means of Cohen kappa (k = .84), which means a high level of agreement between the evaluators.

Table 3: Speaking Assessment Rubric Used in the Intervention

Criterion	4 – Excellent	3 – Proficient	2 – Developing	1 – Beginning	Weight
Pronunciation & Intelligibility	Clear, minimal L1 influence, fully intelligible	Mostly clear, minor L1 influence, intelligible	Some L1 influence, occasionally unclear	Heavy L1 influence, often unclear	×2

Criterion	4 – Excellent	3 – Proficient	2 – Developing	1 – Beginning	Weight
Fluency & Pace	Natural pace, minimal hesitation	Mostly fluent, some hesitation	Frequent hesitation, uneven pace	Highly dysfluent, long pauses	×2
Vocabulary Range	Wide, precise, topic-appropriate	Adequate range, mostly appropriate	Limited, repetitive vocabulary	Very limited, L1 borrowing frequent	×1
Grammatical Accuracy	Accurate, complex structures used	Mostly accurate, minor errors	Errors present, meaning preserved	Frequent errors, meaning often obscured	×1
Coherence & Organisation	Logical, well-signposted, cohesive	Generally organised, minor lapses	Some structure, transitions weak	Little discernible organisation	×1
Communicative Confidence	Highly confident, maintains eye contact, engages audience	Generally confident, some self-correction	Hesitant, limited audience engagement	Very hesitant, reads from notes, avoids eye contact	×1

4.4 Control Group Treatment

The control group was given the basic English Communication Skills teaching as required by Anna University curriculum which includes grammar training, reading comprehension, essay writing, and discrete oral tasks such as reading aloud and answering comprehension questions. The control-group students were not involved in the club-reporting system; however, they were told to resume their normal club attendance. This design will see to it that any between-group disparities in speaking results can be reasonably ascribed to the intervention aspect and not to club participation as such.

4.5 Data Collection Instruments

The collection of quantitative data was conducted with the help of three instruments: (i) the standardised speaking pre-test and post-test which were conducted at the beginning of Semester 1 and at the end of Semester 2 respectively, during which the participants were asked to read a three-minute prepared monologue on a given topic and were graded with the use of the rubric presented in Table 3; (ii) the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS; Horwitz et al., 1986) is a validated, 33-item The qualitative information was gathered by: (i) semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of 20 students in the experimental group (to achieve diversity in terms of school medium, gender, department, and initial level of proficiency) at three levels- beginning, middle, and end of the intervention; (ii) learner reflective journals filled in by all students in the experimental group; and (iii) field notes in the classroom that were filled in by a trained research assistant at 16 randomly selected oral reporting sessions during both semesters.

4.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed with the SPSS Version 27. All of the speaking sub-skill scores were computed and obtained in terms of descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, range). Between-group differences at pre-test (to establish comparability) and post-test (to determine intervention effect) were evaluated using independent samples t -tests. The pre-to- post changes in scores were evaluated using paired samples t -tests in each group. Effect sizes were determined by using Cohen d. The relations between the participation frequency in clubs and the FLCAS stress scores in anxiety and gains in

speaking performance were evaluated using Pearson correlation analyses. Thematic analysis was done on qualitative data in form of interviews and journals, in accordance with the six-step procedure of Braun and Clarke (2006), and the themes were identified inductively based on the data and cross-validated using the deductive framework offered by the theoretical basis of the study.

V. RESULTS

5.1 Pre-Test Comparability

Independent t-tests on pre-test speaking scores established the equalities of both experimental and control groups at the baseline on all six sub-skills. There was no statistically significant difference between the groups (all $p > .05$), which suggests that there were no differences in groups in terms of their initial point. The average pre-test scores of both groups were in the developing- beginning boundary of the 4-point rubric scale, which is between 1.8 and 2.3 and this has shown that most of the participants who participated in the study did so with limited oral proficiency in English as is expected given that they were vernacular medium learners. Table 4 summarises pre-test scores

Table 4: Pre-Test Speaking Scores – Experimental and Control Groups (Means and Standard Deviations)

Speaking Sub-skill	Exp. Pre M (SD)	Con. Pre M (SD)	t-value	df	p
Pronunciation	2.1 (0.52)	2.0 (0.49)	1.12	118	.264
Fluency	2.3 (0.48)	2.2 (0.51)	1.08	118	.283
Vocabulary	2.0 (0.55)	2.1 (0.53)	0.97	118	.334
Grammatical Accuracy	2.2 (0.50)	2.1 (0.47)	1.05	118	.295
Coherence	1.9 (0.58)	1.9 (0.55)	0.00	118	1.00
Confidence	1.8 (0.61)	1.8 (0.59)	0.00	118	1.00

5.2 Post-Test Results: Quantitative Gains

Comparisons of post tests showed a significant between-group difference with high significance in all the six speaking sub-skills with the experimental group dominant over control group. Statistically significant results were obtained on all sub-skills (all $p < .001$) using independent samples t -tests, and the effect sizes (Cohen d range of 1.82-2.64) were large, suggesting that the intervention exerted a significant practical influence on speaking performance. In the experimental group, paired samples t-tests established the high levels of significance of pre-to-post gains in all sub-skills. The greatest increase was observed in communicative confidence ($D = 2.1$, $d = 2.64$), then in fluency ($D = 1.5$, $d = 2.31$), and lastly in coherence ($D = 1.8$, $d = 2.47$). Table 5 gives these results.

Table 5: Post-Test Speaking Scores and Comparison Statistics – Experimental vs Control Groups

Sub-skill	Exp. Post M (SD)	Con. Post M (SD)	Exp. Δ	Con. Δ	t	p	d
Pronunciation	3.6 (0.41)	2.3 (0.48)	+1.5	+0.3	16.41	<.001	2.14
Fluency	3.8 (0.38)	2.4 (0.45)	+1.5	+0.2	18.22	<.001	2.31
Vocabulary	3.5 (0.44)	2.3 (0.50)	+1.5	+0.2	14.83	<.001	1.82
Grammar	3.4 (0.47)	2.3 (0.49)	+1.2	+0.2	13.91	<.001	1.97
Coherence	3.7 (0.40)	2.3 (0.47)	+1.8	+0.4	18.64	<.001	2.47

Sub-skill	Exp. Post M (SD)	Con. Post M (SD)	Exp. Δ	Con. Δ	t	p	d
Confidence	3.9 (0.35)	2.2 (0.51)	+2.1	+0.4	21.33	<.001	2.64

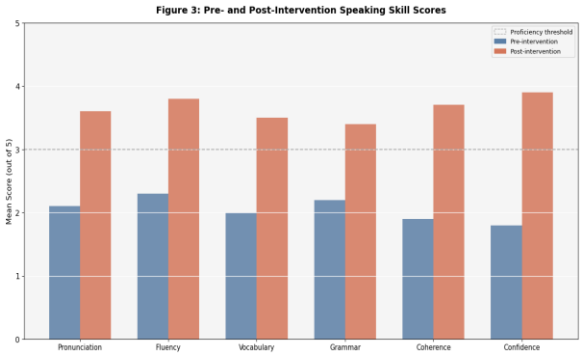

Figure 3: Pre- and Post-Intervention Mean Speaking Scores by Sub-skill

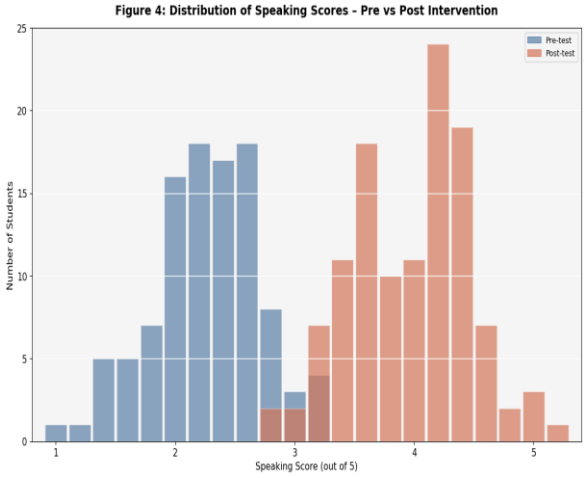

Figure 4: Distribution of Speaking Scores at Pre- and Post-test (Experimental Group)

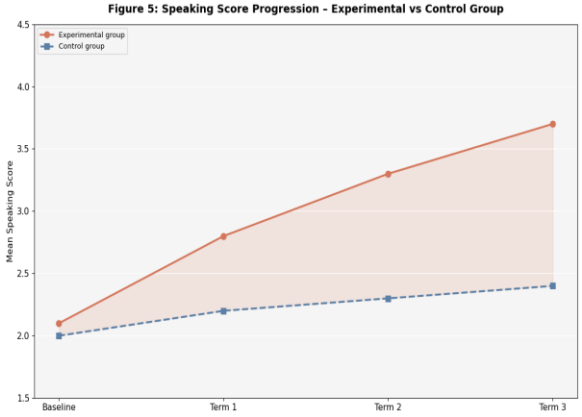

Figure 5: Term-wise Speaking Score Progression – Experimental vs Control Group

5.3 Anxiety Reduction

Comparison of the FLCAS scores showed that there was a great decrease in foreign language speaking anxiety in the experimental group at the three measurement points. Baseline scores of FLCAS were 95.4 (SD = 11.2) in the experimental and 94.8 (SD = 10.9) in the control group, which were statistically the same (p =.78). By mid-point (end of Semester 1), the mean FLCAS score in the experimental group had decreased to 79.3 (SD = 12.4) whereas the control group score was high 91.2 (SD=11.8) and the between-group difference was significant (t(118) = 5.64, p <.001, d=1.03). The experimental group at post-intervention had further reduced the mean FLCAS score to 67.1 (SD = 13.6), whereas the control group had an average score of 90.4 (SD = 11.4) (t(118) = 9.81, p <.001, d = 1.79). The percentage of students identified as high, moderate, and low anxiety at every point of measurement is presented in Figure 6.

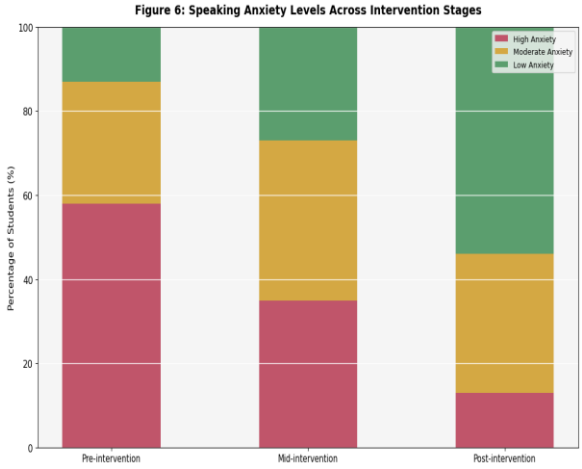

Figure 6: Speaking Anxiety Levels Across Intervention Stages (Experimental Group)

5.4 Club Participation and Speaking Performance

The Pearson correlation analysis indicated that there are significant positive associations between club participation frequency and increases in performance at the terms of speaking. The results indicated that students who experienced five or more club activities throughout the semester recorded significantly greater

speaking gains (M = +1.82) compared to those students who experienced less than three activities (M = +0.87) with significant difference being statistically significant ($t(58) = 7.34$, $p < .001$). The participation rates among the club types also differed significantly as communication-related clubs (Debate, Toastmasters, Campus FM, MUN, Theater) yielded the highest rate of voluntary participation and strongest correlations with speaking benefits. Figure 7 shows the engagement rates by club type.

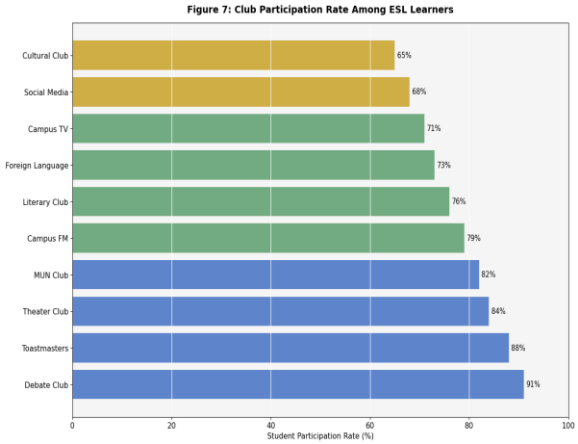

Figure 7: Student Participation Rate by Club Type (Top 10 Clubs by Engagement)

Table 6: Correlation Between Club Participation Frequency and Speaking Score Gains

Speaking Sub-skill	r (Participation × Score Gain)	p-value	Interpretation
Pronunciation	.58	<.001	Moderate positive
Fluency	.67	<.001	Strong positive
Vocabulary	.61	<.001	Strong positive
Grammatical Accuracy	.49	<.001	Moderate positive
Coherence	.63	<.001	Strong positive
Confidence	.74	<.001	Strong positive

5.5 Qualitative Findings: Thematic Analysis

Interpretation of the interview transcripts, reflection journal and the notes of observation identified that there are five key themes; (1) authentic purpose as the motivator in speaking, (2) peer community as the scaffold of confidence, (3) domain specific vocabulary learning with exposure to the club, (4) anxiety reduction by the process of report making and (5) re-establishing identity as the English-medium speaker

Theme 1: Authentic Purpose as a Speaking Motivator

The students have continually claimed that the authentic communicative intent of club reporting which is the necessity to really tell their classmates about actual activities they had engaged in provided them with a qualitatively different motive to talk hard than the ordinary classroom activities. A member of the Robotics and AI Club said: 'When I needed to tell my entire class what we had done in the robotics competition, I found myself strongly motivated to impress them. Not that it was only to get marks--my friends were interested too to know.' This feeling of authentic communicative intention, which is consistent with the theorisation of authenticity as motivational driver formulated by van Lier (1996) was evident within all twenty participants in the interview despite their original level of proficiency.

Theme 2: Peer Community as a Confidence Scaffold

Community of club membership was a very important source of linguistic and affective scaffold. Students indicated that they used their club WhatsApp groups, as an informal English language practice area where they corrected each other in regards to their report, and rehearsed with club-mates who spoke better English. One of the Toastmasters Club participants has noted: I had a senior in my club who would listen to my report prior to me presenting it at a classroom and advising

me on areas that my English was incoherent. Before the third report I had begun to perceive my own errors, in advance of hers.' This peer scaffolding relationship is an exact fit to the ZPD model (Vygotsky, 1978) and the concept of negotiated assistance by the interactionists (Long, 1996).

Theme 3: Domain-Specific Vocabulary Acquisition
Learner journals were analyzed to find out that there was a significant increase in domain-specific vocabulary of students in English, and that students in technology clubs formed more technical reporting registers (e.g., machine learning algorithm, iterative prototyping, cybersecurity vulnerability) and students in arts and social clubs more descriptive, evaluative, and narrative vocabularies. This observation supports the findings of the studies of Coxhead (2000) on the academic word list and Coady and Hucks (1997) on incidental vocabulary learning via contextualised reading and listening, and the extension of these principles in the oral vocabulary learning sphere.

Theme 4: Progressive Anxiety Reduction through Iterative Reporting
In the reflective journals, students were recording a steady record of anxiety alleviation throughout the intervention process. Early journals were typified by strong rates of apprehension, and students reported about bodily signs of anxiousness (trembling, sweating, voice shaking) and evasive avoidance (desiring not to attend reporting days). In the middle of the semester, preparation, familiarity with the topic, and experience that the students have gained were more and more reported as anxiety management strategies. Through the second semester, the emotional register in journals had changed to the top of being anxious to being confident and even enjoying the speaking task. This pattern is very similar to the desensitisation intermediate of speaking anxiety reduction proposed by Arnold (1999) and development of metacognitive strategies in FLSA management theorised by Oxford (1990).

Theme 5: Identity Reconstruction as an English-Medium Speaker
Probably the most theoretically important qualitative result was related to the students describing a slowly changing linguistic identity - the re-conceptualization as someone who cannot speak English to someone who is learning to speak English in my own way. Such identity change, which a number of interviewees referred to as a life-changing personal experience is indicative of the theoretical efforts of Norton (2000) and Pavlenko (2002) on identity investment and language learning. Students that reported the most significant identity changes also experienced the greatest speaking gains, which indicates that there is a bidirectional relationship between linguistic identity investment and oral performance development.

VI. DISCUSSION

6.1 Interpreting the Quantitative Findings
The statistically significant and large speaking gains recorded in the experimental group, in comparison with the small and non-significant speaking gains recorded in the control group are good indicators that the club-based reporting intervention was a significant causal influence on the speaking development of students at CIT that use the vernacular medium. These results align with the larger literature on TBLT of focusing on authentic and purposeful tasks as the motivators of oral proficiency development (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004; Skehan, 1998) and bring this body of literature to the particular setting of an Indian engineering college ELT. Especially high gains of communicative confidence (D = 2.1) and coherence (D = 1.8) are worth mentioning.

Communicative confidence, also through the rubric criterion of willingness to talk, maintenance of eye contact, and active interest in the audience, is the very dimension that is most diagnosed by FLSA (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994). The fact that this was the dimension that has improved the most would indicate that the intervention was especially successful in controlling the affective barriers that most severely impair the students who study in the vernacular medium. The acquisition of coherence, in its turn, represents the manifestation of organisational competence on a discourse level that is, the capacity to organise a spoken discourse into a coherent, signposted unitary whole, and not a collection of separate utterances, which is one of the primary indicators of rising oral proficiency (Skehan, 1998; Bygate, 2001). The positive correlations between participation in the club and frequency of speaking and gains in speaking are of significance (Table 6). They

imply that classroom reporting task in itself is not the real mechanism of action but the whole process of genuine experience, language pre-work, oral presentation, peer-reviewing, and reflective journaling which comprises the intervention. This observation is in line with the motivational self-system theory of Dornyei (2001) that place the engagement in genuine L2 activities, as a central instrument of relationship between language learning motivation and performance.

6.2 Theoretical Implications

The results of the study are related to a number of overlapping theoretical discussions within applied linguistics and language education. First, they give new evidence of the usefulness of TBLT in non-Western, resource-based learning conditions, where the practical viability of elaborated task design has been sometimes doubted (Canagararajah, 2005; Swan, 2005). The club-reporting system shows that the thriving of genuine communicatively saturated tasks can be created using the existing institutional resources and social organization of the engineering colleges without involving costly resources and high-tech penetrating infrastructure.

Second, the results provide an extension of the sociocultural theoretical explanation of language learning because they indicate that ZPD-mediated peer scaffolding is not only effective in formal instructional dyads but also in informal and community-based interactions of student club networks. This observation has implication towards the development of language learning settings that utilizes the social networks of students as pedagogical resources - a theoretically grounded approach to pedagogical development based on sociocultural theory of language development proposed by Lantolf and Thorne (2006) but has received very little empirical investigation in the Indian engineering college setting. Third, the qualitative identity results are added to the existing literature on the language learning, and identity within the postcolonial and multilingual backgrounds. The fact that club-based reporting is what led to the reconstruction of the identity among vernacular medium students, which allowed them to reconstruct themselves as the legitimate and capable speakers of the English language, has enormous implication on the affective and ideological aspects of ELT in the context where English is viewed as the language of both aspirations and a source of sociolinguistic inequality (Canagararaj, 2006; Pennycook, 2001).

6.3 Pedagogical Implications

The research has various direct and transferable pedagogical implications on ELT practitioners in Indian engineering colleges. To begin with, it shows that the integration of extracurricular club activities into the formal English language instruction via structured oral reporting tasks is feasible and effective. The resources to be added to achieve this integration are minimal: all that is required is a structured reporting template, a speaking rubric, a systematic schedule of the reporting sessions to be implemented during the current period of English classes, and a trained instructor who is also trained on how to facilitate peer feedback and reflective debriefing.

Second, the article emphasizes the use of scaffolding oral production activities by using a gradual release of responsibility model (Pearson and Gallagher, 1983) where the high level of initial assistance (sentence frames, topic planning templates, vocabulary pre-teaching) is decreased as students gain confidence and automaticity. The three-phase interventions scaffold used in this intervention was effective in addressing two requirements of cognitive challenge and affective support as TBLT practitioners are faced with working with a group of anxious, and low-proficiency learners. Third, the results provide importance of peer learning communities, formal classroom peer evaluation as well as informal club-based peer scaffolding as potent mediators of speaking development. These peer learning ecologies should be actively developed by ELT practitioners in engineering colleges, such as training peer evaluators in using speaking rubrics, facilitating peer practice partnerships across and within clubs, and designing classroom practices that enable the leveraging of the heterogeneous domain knowledge that is represented within a classroom of students in different clubs.

VII. CONCLUSION

This paper has established via a rigorous mixed-method quasi-experimental design the fact that structured oral reporting in the form of club-activity-based is a highly effective intervention that can be

employed in improving the speaking of vernacular medium ESL learners in an engineering college setting in South India. The intervention yielded statistically significant and practically significant improvements in all six of the targeted speaking sub-skills of pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, coherence, and communicative confidence, with the largest improvements made on the affectively high-stakes dimensions of confidence and coherence. The simultaneous decrease in foreign language speaking anxiety, as indicated by the FLCAS, and the deep qualitative evidence of identity re-construction in learners, also speak to the holistic developmental effect of the intervention on the strictly linguistic. The research has three main contributions to the field. Methodologically, it offers an operationalisation in details and replicable of club-activity reporting as an instructional model that contains a validated speaking rubric, structured preparation protocol, and a peer review cycle that can be followed or modified to the ELT practitioners in analogous institutional settings. Theoretically, it applies TBLT and sociocultural theory to the underresearched area of extracurricular language learning in Indian engineering colleges, proving that rich club ecosystems of the latter is not an incidental phenomenon but can be leveraged as the most efficient tool of language teaching. It offers powerful evidence-based explanations of the institutional policies that formally incorporate club involvement of students in the English language courses, and structured oral reporting as the mediating pedagogical process.

Study limitations are the fact that it was conducted in one institution and this might limit the generalisation of results. The future studies need to replicate the intervention in several paces in various South Indian states to test its stability in various situations of the vernacular medium. The longitudinal studies on the retention of the speaking gains after the intervention duration and into the professional lives of students would greatly enhance the body of evidence. Also, the verbal and observable aspects of speaking proficiency as the subject of the study leave unexplored the possibility of using digital technologies, such as podcast, video blogs, and digital storytelling, as the additional platform to report on club activities, which should be investigated specifically in the context of the digital competence of the modern generation of students. To conclude, the present research presents a vision of the transformation of the rampant predicament of the English speaking progression of the vernacular medium students into a prospect of genuine, community based, and emotionally enabling language education. This work reveals that by not looking out and seeking expensive technological fixes but instead looking in, at the human and institutional resources of the engineering college- its sixty clubs, its heterogeneous student communities, the mentoring relationships it already has built into place- that the best pedagogical interventions can be those that realise and utilise what is already in place.

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