



### Research Article

## Obstacles to Sinhala Oral Communication among Deep-Sea Fishermen: A Phenomenological Study

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### Obstacles to Sinhala Oral Communication among Deep-Sea Fishermen: A Phenomenological Study

**Abstract.** This phenomenological study explores the obstacles to effective Sinhala oral communication experienced by Tamil-speaking deep-sea fishermen in the Ampara District of Sri Lanka. Adopting a qualitative research design, data were collected from sixty fishermen through in-depth semi-structured interviews to capture their lived experiences of spoken communication in professional contexts. The data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. The study is theoretically grounded in Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, 1973) and Cummins' (1979)

Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis, providing insight into how linguistic adjustment, oral proficiency, and cross-linguistic transfer influence everyday communicative interactions. The findings reveal that limited Sinhala oral competence significantly hinders fishermen's professional coordination, workplace safety, and collaborative engagement with Sinhalese fishermen and navy personnel. These obstacles stem not only from linguistic inadequacies in speaking and listening but also from broader sociocultural factors, including limited opportunities for sustained intergroup interaction and unequal access to spoken Sinhala learning resources. The study recommends the implementation of regionally responsive, hypermedia-based Sinhala oral communication programmes incorporating audio, visuals, animations, and interactive elements to support experiential language learning among junior fishermen. Such interventions are expected to enhance oral communicative competence, strengthen intergroup collaboration, and contribute to sustainable professional development within the deep-sea fishing community.

**Keywords:** Sinhala Oral Communication, Language Barriers, Deep-Sea Fishermen, Phenomenological Study, Effective Communication

## INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century, deep-sea fishing has expanded beyond a subsistence-based occupation to become a highly organized and economically significant industry at both national and global levels. In Sri Lanka, particularly in the Ampara District, deep-sea fishing constitutes a crucial livelihood for many Tamil-speaking youths who seek economic mobility and professional recognition within the fishing sector. These fishermen aspire to integrate into the broader national fishing community and to operate effectively within increasingly complex maritime environments. According to FAO (2020), modern deep-sea fishing demands not only technical expertise but also effective communication among diverse stakeholders, including fellow fishermen, regulatory authorities, and naval personnel.

Within the Sri Lankan maritime context, Sinhala functions as the primary language of official communication, especially in interactions with navy officers and port authorities. Consequently, limited proficiency in spoken Sinhala presents significant obstacles for Tamil-speaking deep-sea fishermen, particularly in situations that require immediate oral interaction, such as navigation coordination, safety communication, and regulatory compliance. As Spolsky (2009) notes, language barriers in occupational settings often lead to misunderstanding, marginalization, and restricted professional participation. These challenges are intensified in multilingual societies where unequal access to dominant language resources persists.

This study investigates the obstacles to Sinhala oral communication experienced by Tamil-speaking deep-sea fishermen in the Ampara District during their day-to-day professional activities. Specifically, the study seeks to (1) identify the nature of oral communication barriers encountered in Sinhala-mediated interactions, and (2) explore the strategies fishermen adopt to cope with these challenges, along with their perceptions of effective solutions to improve spoken Sinhala competence. By focusing on oral communication rather than general language proficiency, the study highlights the practical, situational dimensions of language use in maritime work environments.

Adopting a phenomenological qualitative research design, this study aims to understand fishermen's lived experiences of Sinhala oral communication barriers. Phenomenology is concerned with capturing how individuals perceive and make meaning of a shared phenomenon within a particular social context (van Manen, 2016). A qualitative approach was selected to explore the depth, complexity, and subjective meanings attached to communication experiences, rather than to measure them quantitatively. Through in-depth engagement with participants' narratives, the study addresses the "how" and "why" of communication obstacles, emphasizing meaning, context, and experiential understanding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Language and Communication

Language and oral communication play a crucial role in shaping interpersonal interaction, particularly in occupational contexts where meaning must be conveyed accurately and efficiently. Language functions as the symbolic system through which speakers express ideas, while oral communication involves the real-time negotiation and interpretation of those meanings in social interaction (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). In multilingual societies, the effectiveness of oral communication becomes closely tied to speakers' proficiency in the dominant language used within professional domains. As Canale and Swain (1980) argue, communicative competence extends beyond grammatical knowledge to include sociolinguistic and strategic abilities necessary for successful spoken interaction.

Scholars have emphasized that oral communication is not merely the transmission of information but a dynamic and interactive process shaped by context, power relations, and shared understanding. According to Gumperz (1982), conversational meaning is co-constructed through verbal cues, cultural norms, and interactional strategies, making oral communication particularly challenging in cross-linguistic settings. Similarly, Saville-Troike (2003) highlights that oral communication is deeply embedded in sociocultural practices, and mismatches in language use can lead to misinterpretation and communicative breakdowns.

In occupational environments such as maritime and deep-sea fishing industries, effective oral communication is essential for coordination, safety, and collaboration. Research in workplace communication indicates that language barriers in high-risk professions can restrict participation, reduce efficiency, and compromise safety outcomes (Roberts, 2010). In the Sri Lankan context, Sinhala serves as the primary language of oral interaction in official maritime operations, including communication with navy personnel and port authorities. For Tamil-speaking deep-sea fishermen, limited proficiency in spoken Sinhala presents significant obstacles during professional interactions, particularly in time-sensitive and safety-critical situations.

Despite the recognized importance of oral communication in multilingual workplaces, there remains limited empirical research that captures the lived experiences of marginalized occupational groups facing dominant-language barriers. This gap is especially evident in phenomenological accounts of Sinhala oral communication challenges encountered by Tamil-speaking deep-sea fishermen in Sri Lanka. Addressing this gap, the present study adopts a phenomenological approach

to explore the nature of these obstacles as experienced by fishermen in their everyday professional lives, with particular attention to how linguistic, social, and contextual factors shape their oral communication experiences.

### **Obstacles to Sinhala Oral Communication among Deep-Sea Fishermen**

Effective oral communication is fundamental to occupational coordination, safety, and intercultural collaboration, particularly in high-risk professions such as deep-sea fishing. Spoken language serves not only as a means of exchanging information but also as a mechanism through which authority, cooperation, and trust are negotiated in workplace interactions (Holmes & Stubbe, 2015). In Sri Lanka's maritime sector, Sinhala functions as the dominant oral medium in interactions involving port authorities, navy personnel, and Sinhalese fishing communities. For Tamil-speaking deep-sea fishermen, limited proficiency in spoken Sinhala presents significant obstacles to effective participation in these communicative spaces.

Research on workplace multilingualism indicates that oral communication barriers often marginalize minority-language speakers and restrict their access to professional networks and learning opportunities (Angouri, 2014). In oral, time-sensitive environments such as maritime operations, difficulties in speaking and comprehending the dominant language may lead to hesitation, misinterpretation, and reduced confidence (Bjørge & Whittaker, 2015). These challenges are not merely linguistic but are shaped by power relations embedded in workplace discourse, where dominant-language speakers typically control interactional norms and decision-making processes.

Studies in South Asian multilingual contexts further highlight how oral language barriers influence occupational identity and participation. Canagarajah (2013) argues that speakers with limited competence in dominant languages often adopt avoidance strategies, silence, or minimal responses to reduce the risk of communicative failure. Such strategies, while protective, can limit meaningful engagement and reinforce perceptions of incompetence. In the Sri Lankan context, research by Wijesinghe (2018) demonstrates that Tamil-speaking workers in Sinhala-dominant workplaces frequently experience anxiety and exclusion during oral interactions, particularly in institutional settings involving authority figures.

Despite growing scholarship on workplace communication, there remains limited phenomenological research that captures how Tamil-speaking deep-sea fishermen experience obstacles to Sinhala oral communication in their daily professional lives. Most existing studies address language barriers at a policy or training level, offering limited insight into fishermen's lived experiences of speaking, listening, misunderstanding, and negotiation in real-time interactions. Addressing this gap, the present study adopts a phenomenological approach to explore the essence of these oral communication obstacles as experienced by Tamil-speaking deep-sea fishermen in the Ampara District. By foregrounding fishermen's voices, the study seeks to illuminate how linguistic, social, and occupational factors intersect to shape Sinhala oral communication in the deep-sea fishing sector.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore the obstacles to Sinhala oral communication experienced by Tamil-speaking deep-sea fishermen. Qualitative research is particularly suited to investigating how individuals make sense of their experiences within real-life contexts, emphasizing meaning, perception, and interpretation rather than numerical measurement (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). By focusing on participants' subjective accounts, the present study seeks to understand how oral communication challenges are experienced, interpreted, and negotiated in professional maritime settings.

The research is grounded in phenomenology, a methodological approach concerned with exploring individuals' lived experiences of a particular phenomenon. Phenomenological inquiry aims to capture the essence of experiences as perceived by those who live them, rather than imposing predefined categories or explanations (Moustakas, 1994). In the context of this study, phenomenology enables an in-depth examination of how Tamil-speaking deep-sea fishermen experience obstacles in Sinhala oral communication during interactions with Sinhalese fishermen and navy personnel.

### Participants and Sampling

Participants comprised sixty Tamil-speaking deep-sea fishermen from the Ampara District of Sri Lanka. They represented diverse age groups, educational levels, and years of fishing experience to ensure a rich range of perspectives on oral communication practices. The selection of participants was guided by purposive sampling, a non-probability technique commonly used in qualitative research to identify individuals who have direct experience with the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2015). This approach ensured that all participants had regular exposure to Sinhala-mediated oral communication in their professional activities.

The sample size was considered adequate for phenomenological research, which prioritizes depth and richness of experiential data over statistical representativeness. Saunders et al. (2018) note that qualitative saturation can be achieved when recurring patterns and meanings become evident across participants' narratives. The inclusion of sixty participants allowed for both thematic depth and variation in lived experiences, enhancing the credibility of the findings.

### Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which are widely recognized as an effective method for eliciting detailed accounts of lived experience (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to guide the discussion using predetermined questions while remaining flexible to probe emerging issues related to Sinhala oral communication. The interview questions focused specifically on speaking and listening experiences, communication breakdowns, coping strategies, and perceptions of effective oral interaction in professional contexts.

To ensure methodological rigor, the interview guide was developed following an extensive review of literature on oral communication, workplace multilingualism, and

phenomenological research. The guide was reviewed by two subject specialists in sociolinguistics and qualitative methodology to establish content clarity and relevance. A pilot study involving five Tamil-speaking fishermen was conducted to test question comprehensibility and interview flow, resulting in minor refinements to wording and sequencing.

All interviews were conducted in a confidential and supportive environment to encourage open and honest responses. With participants' consent, interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim to preserve the accuracy of oral expressions and meanings.

### Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis, following the systematic procedures outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method involved familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing and refining themes, and producing a coherent analytical narrative. An inductive coding approach was employed to allow themes to emerge directly from participants' accounts of Sinhala oral communication obstacles. This process facilitated the identification of recurring patterns related to linguistic difficulty, interactional anxiety, power relations, and situational constraints in spoken communication.

### Theoretical Framework

While thematic analysis enabled the organization and interpretation of experiential data, theoretical perspectives were employed to explain the underlying mechanisms influencing oral communication barriers. Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) (Giles & Ogay, 2007) provided a lens to examine how fishermen adjusted—or failed to adjust—their speech styles during interactions with Sinhala speakers, particularly in asymmetrical power contexts involving navy personnel. Additionally, Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis (Cummins, 2000) informed the analysis by explaining how existing Tamil language competence could support the development of Sinhala oral skills when meaningful and supportive learning conditions were available.

By integrating phenomenological inquiry with sociolinguistic theory, the study moves beyond mere description to offer an interpretive understanding of why obstacles to Sinhala oral communication arise and how they shape professional interaction among deep-sea fishermen.

Table 1 Language Obstacles to Effective Communication in speaking Sinhala

Main Theme 1: Challenges, Causes, and Importance of Effective Communication in Speaking Sinhala Language		
Main Theme	Challenges	
Sub Themes		
Inside the fishing field: fishing plan, fishing location	Communication barriers remain very common to all	

	Tamil speaking fishermen during their deep sea fishing and navigating times.	
	Responses	
	<i>"We are well conscious of our fishing control in deep sea fishing means specific term of fishing and plan that we try to follow but yet sometimes we feel very confused when we cannot transfer our message to navy personalities or Sinhalese fishermen and it usually happens."</i>	
Outside the fishing field: catering, services, shopping, traveling	In this modern deep sea fishing, the Tamil speaking fishermen travel in different harbours with their cluster fishing groups and small groups to take part in well-established fishing location where they have to handle with Sinhala language communication issues outside the field. All the participants agree that they face diverse problems there.	
	Responses	
	<i>"We face Sinhala communication problem everywhere even outside the field as we stayed in harbours in Sinhala area for our out district fishing, We suffered a lot. Once We had to buy some grocery in harbours in Sinhala area. We were unaided; We hardly managed the communication with shopkeepers there. We could not make the shop keeper clear about our need."</i>	

Main Theme	Causes:	
Sub Themes		
Week academic background	Tamil speaking deep-sea fishermen of the Ampara district in Sri Lanka usually come from different backgrounds of the area by dedicating their day and night to fishing. So the participants enlighten various causes for barriers to effective Sinhala language communication.	
	Responses	
	<i>"We are well aware of our standing control in deep-sea fishing means particular term of fishing and plan that we try to follow but yet sometimes we feel very</i>	

	<i>disorganised when we cannot carry our communication to our navy personalities or Sinhalese fishermen and it frequently occurs.”</i>	
Lack of confidence	It is detected that majority of the Tamil speaking fishermen trust they do not take part in significant discussion of the communication because of lack confidence.	
	Responses	
	<i>“Sometimes in fishing actions we need to ask Sinhalese fishermen but the lack of confidence in Sinhala language makes us silent and we don’t bother to discuss with them.”</i>	
Fear and avoidance	The fear of speaking Sinhala language is another important cause is observed that makes participants avoid speaking with Sinhalese team mates and navy persons.	
	Responses	
	<i>“We usually avoid asking anything from our Sinhalese fishermen or navy persons because we believe it might go in deep discussion that is hard for fishermen like us. So we don’t dare to discuss very important things with Sinhalese fishermen or navy persons sometimes.”</i>	

Main Theme	Importance:	
Sub Themes		
Importance of professional growth of fishermen	in	In fishing, Tamil speaking fishermen keep on developing their skills every day in different situations and in every event of the fishing by sharing technics and important skills of the fishing. Language barriers become resistance to their development when they have Sinhalese fishermen

	and navy persons around them.	
	Responses	
	<p><i>“We don’t bother to discuss with our Sinhalese fishermen. We know if we speak, we will make mistakes. It has impacted on our improvement. If we had asked some important things them frequently, we would have improved more skills of our fishing.”</i></p>	
Importance in professional relationships of fishermen	In fishing, Tamil speaking fishermen have opportunities to have close relations with Sinhalese fishermen and navy persons, so they can develop their professional relations with them, but language barriers are great hindrances in their relations.	
	Responses	
	<p><i>“Actually in the starting of the fishing, our fishing mate Bandara Thilaka was quite close to us but soon after we felt he was avoiding us. Surely it was our hesitant communication with him in speaking Sinhala language; we didn’t have a good communication most of the times so that we couldn’t make him a good friend.”</i></p>	

Strategies and planning		
Interpreters	All participants come up with very nice responses that how they have adopted the different strategies to face Sinhala language communication barriers. There is not any official interpreter’s availability nor needed any because these fishermen keep learning through the particular passage of time. Some of the fishermen are well experienced and got good grip on Sinhala language	

	communication, they are usually available for new entered fishermen to help out them in such situations	
	Responses	
	<i>“When we were in Galle for fishing, there were some Sinhalese fishermen with us. They could understand Tamil so we had their support for filling that communication gap. They translate us what Sinhalese fishermen spoke to us. Otherwise it would have been tough for us.”</i>	
Support	According to all participants there is no proper support available for fishermen to face such Sinhala language communication challenges.	
	Responses	
	<i>“No, there is nothing like that. We have never seen any formal Sinhala language classes or particular in the teaching but it is a common practice that we get someone to translate us.”</i>	

Suggestions		
	Majority of perceptions agree that there is great need of Sinhala language communication skills’ trainings with hypermedia at initial level of fishermen when they involve in fishing level. So fishermen once reach at national level, they should be well trained and confident to face the upcoming challenges of Sinhala language communication skills.	

	Responses	
	<i>“Sure, there must be Sinhala language communication classes at basic level with hypermedia. And we are sure soon there will be such policies for having them by fisheries office.”</i>	

## Findings and Thematic Discussion

### Theme 1: Lived Experiences of Obstacles in Sinhala Oral Communication

The first major theme emerging from the data relates to the lived experiences of Tamil-speaking deep-sea fishermen in navigating Sinhala oral communication in both professional and everyday contexts. Fifty-three participants reported frequent difficulty in speaking and understanding Sinhala during fishing operations at sea as well as in shore-based interactions in predominantly Sinhalese environments such as harbours, lodging facilities, markets, and administrative offices. Participants described feelings of frustration, hesitation, and communicative anxiety when attempting to express operational needs, negotiate contracts, or respond to instructions in Sinhala. These experiences reflect broader findings in workplace communication research, which indicate that limited oral proficiency in a dominant language can constrain professional participation and self-efficacy (Holmes & Stubbe, 2015).

Participants’ narratives revealed that oral communication difficulties were most pronounced in time-sensitive and authority-driven interactions, particularly when engaging with navy personnel and port officials. Similar observations are reported by Angouri (2014), who notes that oral language barriers in multilingual workplaces often marginalize minority-language speakers and restrict their interactional agency.

### Theme 2: Factors Contributing to Obstacles in Sinhala Oral Communication

The second theme identifies key factors shaping fishermen’s oral communication challenges in Sinhala. Three interrelated factors emerged: limited formal education, lack of exposure to spoken Sinhala, and low communicative confidence. Many participants reported minimal schooling in Sinhala and limited opportunities to practice spoken interaction beyond transactional exchanges. This resulted in avoidance of extended conversations with Sinhalese fishermen and officials, reinforcing feelings of inadequacy and fear of ridicule.

These findings align with research by Norton (2013), who emphasizes that language learners’ willingness to speak is strongly influenced by identity, power relations, and perceived legitimacy in interactional spaces. Participants’ reluctance to engage orally reflects not only linguistic limitations but also social positioning within Sinhala-dominant maritime contexts.

### Theme 3: Impact of Sinhala Oral Communication Barriers on Professional Development

The third theme highlights the perceived consequences of Sinhala oral communication barriers on fishermen’s professional development. Several

participants reported losing fishing contracts, employment opportunities, and access to Sinhalese fishing networks due to miscommunication or inability to negotiate orally in Sinhala. Additionally, strained relationships with Sinhalese fishermen and navy personnel were frequently attributed to misunderstandings arising from oral communication breakdowns.

These findings resonate with Roberts (2010), who argues that workplace language barriers often undermine collaboration, trust, and professional mobility. Participants consistently emphasized that oral communication competence was essential for building long-term professional relationships and ensuring safe and coordinated fishing operations.

#### **Theme 4: Coping Strategies and Institutional Gaps**

Another key theme concerns the strategies adopted by fishermen to manage obstacles in Sinhala oral communication. The most common strategy reported was reliance on informal interpreters, typically bilingual crew members or intermediaries at ports. While this strategy enabled basic communication, participants acknowledged that it limited their independence and confidence in direct oral interaction.

Personal coping strategies, such as memorizing commonly used Sinhala phrases and using gestures, were also reported, though these were described as insufficient for complex communication. These findings align with Canagarajah (2013), who notes that marginalized language users often rely on adaptive strategies that enable survival but do not fully address structural inequalities.

Participants further highlighted the absence of institutional support mechanisms, noting that fisheries offices and related authorities did not provide formal resources or training to develop Sinhala oral communication skills. This institutional gap was widely perceived as a major obstacle to sustained language development.

#### **Theme 5: Participant Recommendations and Aspirations**

A final theme emerged from participants' reflections on potential solutions. There was strong consensus that regionally accessible Sinhala oral communication programmes should be introduced, particularly for younger fishermen. Participants emphasized the value of hypermedia-based learning approaches incorporating audio, visual, and interactive elements to build speaking confidence and listening comprehension.

These recommendations are supported by multimedia learning research, which suggests that contextualized and multimodal input can enhance oral language acquisition and learner motivation (Mayer, 2009). Participants believed that improved Sinhala oral communication would empower them to represent their profession more confidently, strengthen intergroup collaboration, and enhance long-term professional sustainability within the deep-sea fishing sector.

### Limitations of the Study

Although this phenomenological study offers valuable insights into the obstacles to Sinhala oral communication experienced by Tamil-speaking deep-sea fishermen in the Ampara District, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study is context-specific, focusing on a single district and a particular occupational group. As qualitative phenomenological research emphasizes depth over breadth, the findings are not intended to be statistically generalizable to all fishing communities or multilingual occupational settings in Sri Lanka (Maxwell, 2012).

Second, the study relies primarily on participants' self-reported accounts of their oral communication experiences. While phenomenology prioritizes lived experience, such narratives may be influenced by memory, emotional response, or social positioning, potentially shaping how participants articulate communication challenges (van Manen, 2016). Participants may also have underreported or overstated certain difficulties due to perceived expectations or concerns about social judgment.

Third, linguistic mediation during data collection posed methodological constraints. Interviews were conducted primarily in Tamil, with occasional shifts to Sinhala or translated responses where necessary. As Temple and Young (2004) note, translation in qualitative research can affect meaning, particularly when discussing nuanced oral communication experiences. Subtle aspects of spoken interaction, such as tone, hesitation, or pragmatic intent, may not have been fully captured through translation.

Fourth, although the inclusion of sixty participants provided rich and diverse experiential data, it may not reflect the full range of Sinhala oral communication obstacles faced by all Tamil-speaking deep-sea fishermen across Sri Lanka. Variations in regional exposure, educational background, and interactional contexts may produce different communication experiences that were beyond the scope of this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Finally, the study was constrained by time and logistical limitations, which prevented the incorporation of participant observation or longitudinal methods. Observational data could have provided additional insight into real-time oral communication practices at sea and in port environments, while longitudinal engagement might have revealed how communication obstacles and coping strategies evolve over time (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019).

Despite these limitations, the study contributes meaningfully to understanding the lived experiences of Tamil-speaking deep-sea fishermen navigating Sinhala oral communication in professional contexts. It provides a foundation for future research that may employ mixed methods, expand geographic scope, or integrate observational and longitudinal approaches to further examine multilingual communication in Sri Lanka's maritime sector.

### CONCLUSION

This phenomenological study explored obstacles to Sinhala oral communication experienced by Tamil-speaking deep-sea fishermen in the Ampara District of Sri

Lanka. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with purposively selected participants to capture their lived experiences of speaking Sinhala in both professional fishing operations and broader social contexts. The study also investigated the underlying causes of communication difficulties and examined potential solutions, including the use of hypermedia-based interventions to enhance oral language competence.

The findings indicate that Sinhala oral communication remains a persistent challenge for Tamil-speaking fishermen, consistent with prior research on workplace language barriers in multilingual settings (Neeley, 2012). Participants attributed these difficulties primarily to three interrelated factors: limited educational background, insufficient proficiency in spoken Sinhala, and lack of communicative confidence. These factors collectively hinder effective oral interaction with Sinhalese colleagues, navy personnel, and contractors, thereby affecting collaboration, negotiation, and professional development.

Another significant finding is the absence of formal institutional support for developing Sinhala oral communication skills. Participants reported that fisheries offices and related governmental agencies do not currently provide structured training or resources to improve spoken Sinhala. This lack of support aligns with observations by Marschan-Piekkari et al. (1999), who note that inadequate institutional interventions often exacerbate oral communication challenges in professional multilingual environments.

Participants overwhelmingly recommended the implementation of structured Sinhala oral communication programs, particularly targeting younger fishermen at under-16 and under-19 levels. They emphasized the potential effectiveness of hypermedia-based learning approaches incorporating audio, visual, and interactive elements, which could complement technical training and strengthen spoken language proficiency. Such interventions are expected to foster professional confidence, facilitate collaboration, and enable Tamil-speaking fishermen to engage more effectively in social and occupational interactions within Sinhala-dominant contexts.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this phenomenological study, several recommendations are proposed to address the obstacles to Sinhala oral communication experienced by Tamil-speaking deep-sea fishermen in the Ampara District of Sri Lanka:

### 1. Regional Hypermedia-Based Sinhala Training for Junior Fishermen

Many deep-sea fishermen in the Ampara District have limited formal education and minimal exposure to Sinhala from school, often engaging predominantly in Tamil-language activities. To address this, the fisheries department should offer hypermedia-based Sinhala oral communication classes at regional fisheries offices. Such training would help junior fishermen develop foundational speaking and listening skills necessary to navigate professional interactions and reduce communication barriers at sea and onshore (Mayer, 2009).

### 2. Integration of Hypermedia Sinhala Courses in Private Training Institutions

Private language institutions should be encouraged or mandated to provide hypermedia-supported Sinhala oral communication programs specifically for young fishermen aged under 19 and under 21. These programs should complement existing technical fishing training and focus on practical spoken Sinhala for professional contexts (Kern, 2014).

### 3. Mentorship and Peer Practice Programs

Senior fishermen should be incentivized to engage in regular oral Sinhala practice sessions with junior fishermen. Peer-led mentorship can create a supportive environment for practicing spoken communication, increase confidence, and prepare fishermen for interactions with Sinhalese colleagues and navy personnel (Norton, 2013).

### 4. District-Level Policy Initiatives for Sinhala Oral Communication

District fisheries departments should develop and implement policies to provide structured Sinhala language courses for junior fishermen across Tamil-speaking districts. Institutionalized programs can ensure consistent access to language learning resources and facilitate the long-term development of oral communication skills (Angouri, 2014).

### 5. Weekly Community-Based Sinhala Oral Activities

Sinhala language academies and district language associations should organize weekly oral communication activities tailored for fishermen. These programs could include conversational practice, role-plays, and interactive hypermedia exercises to reinforce spoken language proficiency and enhance practical communication skills in real-life professional settings (Mayer, 2009; Kern, 2014).

Implementing these recommendations can improve Sinhala oral communication among Tamil-speaking fishermen, strengthen professional collaboration, and promote safer, more efficient operations in the deep-sea fishing industry.

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