

Listening Through Innovative Methods in Education: A Case Study of English Graduate Students of Sargodha University

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Abstract

The present research aims to encapsulate listening skills through innovative methods in education by using different technological tools and activities which are performed by the language teachers in the graduate classrooms of the University of Sargodha. Listening is a difficult conscious task. Since English is the language of academia in Pakistan and is not their mother tongue, so the students from different educational background face glitches during the process of successful listening in class, seminars, presentations, etc. Listening is a complete skill and requires full concentration to understand and decode the message delivered by the sender. The participants of this research were the University students of two different semesters i.e. the students of BS English semester first and third. For their self-assessment, we distributed the questionnaires related to their difficulties to see what kind of problems they faced in learning the second language and how innovative technological methods are helpful to overcome the problems in proficient listening. Drawing on our findings by using bipolar scaling method of 5 point Likert scale we argue that listening through innovative method can foster the process of effective listening for both kinds of educational students. Research also demands proper use of technological tools such as audio visual aids, multimedia, CD Cassettess etc. to enhance teaching contents and generic skills. This research paves way for future researchers to enhance the listening skills and mark them to play pivitol role in learning. It also highlights the use of technology tools as per advancement of age is considered.

Keywords: English language, Innovative methods, Education, Listening skills.

Introduction

Vandergrift (1999) is of the views that listening skills have been performing a major role in our daily conversation and round about forty percent of our communication is based on listening. It is ungovernable to understand listening skills

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especially in acquiring the second language. We must have regular enactment to understand and analyze what the speaker actually wants to convey. In the modern world, English has become an international language and we have required great effort to practice it. New technologies have been developed over the years to practice it through different ways but the traditional method of listening with the help of CDs and cassette is still prevailing to help acquire good listening skills. So, it is redundant to live without listening skills and it has the same worth as the other skills have. This research depicts listening skills through innovative methods in a language classroom and analyzes the students' attitude to its practicality in education.

The main purpose of the listening skills is to receive the message of the sender as much correctly as possible but students at their beginning stage very often face a lot of difficulties for the fulfillment of this purpose and there are also some hurdles in this process of communication because listening to the second language acquires a lot of mental effort and when a hurdle like noise come in its way so students face some difficulties to understand the actual pronunciation and when they listen to the actual pronunciation of those words then comes the issue of their vocabulary. Sometimes a student listens very actively the whole lecture or speech but his poor vocabulary leads him/her to misinterpretation. Especially, the students with poor academic background face difficulties while listening to an English lecture in an educational language classroom. They may be victimized by pronunciation, lack of concentration, vocabulary problems, and fluency of the teacher, contextual problems, and frustration in a new environment, especially during the lecture. Furthermore, they do not have proper knowledge about the ordinary and subsidiary ideas and listeners may fail to recognize the signals which indicate that the speaker is moving from one point to another by giving examples and or repeating a point (Underwood, 1989).

Active and passive listening is also grounded in the pursuit of listening skills in the educational field. Sometimes, students may be listening to a lecture or a speech quietly without any obstruction and sometimes times may engage in a two-way conversation. When students are sitting in a big class, their attention is diverted by gossiping and the distracting topic. In such a case, questioning could be the best way to resurrect their attention. On the other hand, many people put their active listening skills to the test. They speak when listen, they may register nonverbal body language by nodding, making eye contact and through facial expression as well as through kinesics and proxemics. Rogers and Farson (1979) describe active listening as "an important way to bring about changes in people and it brings about changes in people's attitude towards themselves and others". Active listener answers all the questions and also focuses on the deliverance of the lecture in education.

Listening and hearing both are the two sides of the same coin, but there is a difference between hearing and listening says (Lewis, 1979). Hearing is one of our five

senses. We unconsciously hear the voices of our class fellows but cannot incriminate in active listening. On the other hand, listening is something that we grasp consciously, for example, we may be listening to a lecture with proper concentration when our teachers deliver lectures. Sometimes, when we are passing in the bazaar we may hear a lot of voices but we are not listening to them because listening requires proper attention.

An important thing about students' self-assessment is to know whether the focus on a particular problem at hand is helpful for student or not. For the fulfillment of this task, questionnaires were distributed. Questionnaires seemed to be one of the best ways to judge individuals' problems. Since the last few decades, advancement in education as well as in sociology and linguistics has laid to the powerful theories of the nature of listening comprehension in Second Language Acquisition. Ali and Elfessi (2004) have the considerations that owing to the advancement in science and technology in the world, new activities have been introduced for better listening comprehension (1). For instance, means like calling on Skype; listening BBC, other international channels online and TV shows. Students, as well as other people, can improve their listening skills through the internet and websites because these are the tools that provide opportunities for practicing and improving listening skills.

Literature Review

In the modern world, education plays an important role and it is the backbone for the progress of any country. In this regard, different methods of learning have been introduced. Oliver and Trigwell (2005) have given the traditional definition of "blended learning" that is "the combination of web-based internet approaches and the conventional method of learning" (17). Here, conventional learning means to learn from face to face interaction in the classroom and through cassettes and CDs. Sharma (2010) has given two means, learning either through 'technologies' or through 'methodologies' (456).

English has become an international language and the language of science and technology and listening plays an important role for better comprehension. Moreover, English is considered as a foreign language in Pakistani society. Listening has much worth in teaching as well as learning foreign languages. Yang (2005) expressed that language students are frustrated by listening, and they feel helpless while listening to foreign languages (33). Pierce (1998) has the views that students needed much effort to learn and practice listening skills because it is not a passive process. He further explains that listening contains a stream of sound and we have to perceive actively through conscious effort. Knowledge about the topic which we are listening to is very important for better comprehension (13). According to Vandergrift (1999) in our daily conversational activities, we serve 40% on listening, 25% on speaking, 11% on reading and just 9% on writing. Listening skills have the same importance as the other three skills. It plays a tremendous role for students to learn the second language and helps to

improve their pronunciation as well.

Applied linguistics in the late 1960s and early 1970s explained that listening is the basic tool by which students can gain more information and may acquire the second language, and it is the best tool for second language acquisition (Rost and Candlin, 2014). It has been seen that remarkable developments have been taken place within educational fields with the passage of times. Various new methods have been introduced to improve students' listening skills. Ali and Elfessi (2004) have the views that developments in the fields of linguistics and sociology have led to the theories of language comprehension through different methods i.e. by listening to radio, watching TV news and BBC news through internet, websites, online sessions and chatting with native people. Students can improve their listening skills by practicing these novel methods. Internet sources have brought a positive approach in their learning process (1).

Isman and Dabaj (2003) have introduced the idea that listening through the internet is very beneficial for the classroom, because through this method students can bring incredible change in their nominated listening skills (1). Hong, Ridzuan, et al. (2003) studied that learning through technology is a very successful step towards better comprehension (45). They succeeded to learn the student's positive attitude towards learning through the internet and the value of technology in this regard. According to their views, the internet is the best source of learning and it promotes a positive environment, and students can get more benefits from it, on the other hand, they can improve their basic skills.

According to Chinnery (2005), the internet offers a variety of opportunities for language learning, apart from reading and writing it can also include online speaking and listening. The use of technology like a computer in the classroom can also provide a room for students and teachers to cope with how students learn and how teachers teach and influence on the students. In the views of Egbert and Hanson-Smith (1999), there are some fabulous conditions to make an online program more successful, for instance, there must be a friendly environment between students and teachers, a chance must be given to them to interact and negotiate with each other. Moreover, they must speak in the target language, in order to focus on genuine work; and at the end, teachers have to receive feedback from their pupils (4). The technologies have become an optimum tool for increasing students' proficiency for learning the second language, only if we apply these rules on online listening and speaking.

Farrell and Mallard (2006) argue that students feel insecure and that it is very difficult to learn the second language and listening involves not only the interpretation of the coming language but also involve giving response correctly especially in face to face interaction when it is very necessary to give a verbal response (338). They expressed that teachers must focus on the difficulties that students face while listening

to a speech or lecture, instead of saying that students can overcome their difficulties by themselves. There is a connection between listening and speaking speed. If speaking speed is too fast that would be difficult to comprehend for the listener, while low speed is also difficult to understand. However, normal speed is very sufficient for better comprehension. Cook (2013) has the opinion that students feel difficulties in acquiring second language speech due to their limited memory (228). He says that our understanding is dependent on the mind because the mind is the only source that gathers and processes information. The idea is that our mind is less efficient in gaining the second language and it is not due to inability but due to the difficulty by processing information into that very language.

The paper discusses the listening skills by adopting classroom activities, and it also focuses on learning through technologies like the internet, talking with natives on Skype, and listening through BBC or other English programs. Students can overcome these problems by adopting these advanced methods.

Objectives

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the student's problems which they face while listening to a lecture, seminar, presentation or any other kind of speech in English. It focuses on providing methods to enhance the effectiveness of listening skill by using innovative technological methods in Graduate classrooms. Student's self-assessment is also under study, and this would provide proper solutions, which will help them for better understanding while listening.

Methodology

The quantitative method of the research included the student's self-assessment through questionnaires and their role while listening. It also contained the student's feedbacks which helped us to focus on the areas where the students feel insecure. For the purpose of the research, 66 questionnaires were equally distributed among the students of BS 1 and Bs 3 semester respectively. Some of the students were from English medium and others were from Urdu medium school background.

Quantitatively, the research data was collected through Questionnaires using the psychometric tool of 5 points Likert scale. Likert scale probes into convoluted issues of reliability, validity as well as analysis of the scale. The questions were designed according to the needs and proficiency levels of the students. The questionnaire consisted of 12 statements which were responded by the students from 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The data was converted into a percentage. At the end, these questionnaires were collected and the opinions of the students-that are, in which area they feel difficulties-was checked. As a matter of requirement the results and findings of the research are headed as below.

Results and Discussion

This section has more worth because the results of the research are discussed. According to the requirement of the science, all the statements were comprised of 5 possible answers. Students have to answer by circling them deliberately. The data is converted into a percentage. The responses are summarized below in table 1 and 2. In order to identify the clarity positive as well as negative answers appear in the table.

Table 1
Responses of the Semester 1st Students

S. n	Statements	SA %	A %	N %	DA %	SDA %
1	Traditional method (through cassette) is helpful for better listening comprehension.	3	81	9	3	3
2	Classroom presentations are helpful for listening	45	36	9	9	0
3	Visual support through multimedia is helpful for listening skills.	57	36	6	0	0
4	Active listening is helpful for gathering specific information.	78	21	0	0	0
5	Tutor's speed is sufficient for comprehension.	27	69	15	3	0
6	Classroom discussion (student's discussion with students and with teachers) is helpful for listening skills.	54	45	0	0	3
7	Pronunciation of teacher creates no problem.	6	30	15	42	9
8	Web sources help in a better way than classroom listening activities.	24	33	15	21	6
9	Class activities related to listening skills are according to the level of the students.	30	51	9	9	3
10	Students are able to answer listening activities.	15	66	18	0	0
11	Pitch pattern adds to listening comprehension.	24	54	15	6	0
12	Pre-listening helps in the understanding of the lecture.	48	48	0	0	0

The table which is presented above shows the results of the questionnaire in percentage. The first question was about the traditional method through cassette/CD which shows that 81% of students agreed and only 3% of students disagreed. It indicates that most of the students are in favor of this method. In the second row, 45% of students strongly agreed to class presentation activities, 36% agreed, 9% disagreed while 9% remained neutral, respectively. The next row of the table shows the results about visual support through multimedia and certainly 57% strongly agreed, 36%

agreed and 6% of students did not comment. The fourth row highlights the consequences about student's effort by active participation in the class which shows that 78% strongly agreed, and 21% agreed and others gave no response. The fifth question sights the label about tutor's speaking speed and calmly 27% strongly agreed, 69% agreed, and 15% of students remained neutral and only 3% disagreed. The sixth statement throws light on the classroom discussion which highlights that 54% of students throw a vote in strongly agree box, 45% have ticked on agree and others show no response. The subsequent question reveals that how can tutor's speaking style effect on the student's listening skills and 6% strongly agreed, 30% agreed, and 15% neutral, while 42% disagreed and only 9% showed irritation from this method of listening. Moreover, the following row describes, how much web sources can be beneficial, which shows that 24% students have marked strongly agree, 33% marked agree, 15% marked neutral box, 21% marked disagree, and only 6% students strongly disagreed. The ninth row displays, student's activities according to their level and round about 30% students consented strongly agree, 51% disagreed, and only 9% remained neutral and 7% disagreed and only 3% did not mark strongly agree. The succeeding question throws the burden on the student's shoulders which indicates that how much they are competent and either they are able to answers the questions or not, it shows that 15% students strongly agreed, 66% agreed, and 18% neutral. Second last, the statement displays the respondent's opinion about pitch pattern, 24% strongly agreed, 54% agreed, 15% remained neutral, and 6% disagreed. The last statement circulates the pre-listening activities and 48% of students have marked in strongly agree and agree box and others show no result. The findings of the research are given below.

From the analysis of the above study (questionnaire) a number of results can be found which are given as below:

1. Most of the students have the opinion that the traditional method through cassette/CD is more worthwhile for their studies. It indicates that students want to apply this method so that they can learn appropriately. Although in Pakistani scenario this method has not been applied yet in most of the universities. However, it is submitted that there is a grave need for this method so that students can get benefit from this.
2. It can be seen that more than average students consider that classroom presentations are more suitable for listening skills. It is generally observed that we have to encourage listening for better speaking. It is suggested that presentation must be the part of our studies because through presentation learners can learn appropriately.
3. Listening through multimedia is considered worth because students can listen and understand when things will be highlighted in front of them. It would catch the attention of the students and they can easily improve their listening skills.

4. It can be understood that more than 70% of students have the opinion that listening can be improved by actively participating during the lecture. It seems that students must be conscious of their study so that they can get maximum improvement. It is recommended that students must be attentive when the lecture is being delivered by the teacher. Teachers have to introduce some techniques to grasp the attention of the students.
5. It is observed that most of the students are satisfied with their tutor's speed but few of them are dissatisfied. Most of the students belong to Urdu medium they feel difficulties while listening in ESP class. It is up to the tutors that how they can cope with their students' problem. The teacher's speed must be reasonable. There is a great need to focus on those students who do not belong to English medium background so that they can improve their skills.
6. Discussion is the best way of learning. Many of the students have the opinion that through discussion they can improve their listening skills. It is endorsed that there must be a time for discussion at the end of the class or they must be given some time outside the class to discuss with tutors.
7. Most of the time, it seems that the student's attention can be diverted by the pronunciation of the tutor. They could not understand the very words of the lecture. They start to think about that very word and get confused. However, most of the students have the opinion that their tutor's pronunciation is sufficient. It is mentioned that speed must be according to the level of the students so that learning can be ascertained.
8. Majority of the students have the opinion that the internet is the best way to learn. Students can improve their listening skills by talking with native English speakers. BBC news is the best area in which students can easily improve their skills. It is endorsed internet sources must be launched in the classroom.
9. It is worth considered that listening activities must be according to the level of the students. A number of students agreed that they can easily understand the activities. It is observed that students cannot understand at their beginning level. There must be a need to do every work according to their level.
10. If the activities would be according to their level, then they can easily answer the questions. Most of the students feel difficulty in listening comprehension due to lack of appropriate comprehension of the activities. It is suggested that students have to participate actively so that performance can find out in very skills.
11. Maximum students have the estimation that pitch pattern plays a great role while listening to a lecture or other speeches. If the pitch pattern would be according to the situation then students can easily comprehend. It adds to listening skills.

12. It is found from the results of the last question that more than average students show great concern for this system. If the students are already familiar with the topic then they can easily understand what is delivered by the tutor. This is the best way through which students can improve their listening skills. So it is suggested that students have to read the topic which will be delivered in the next class.

Table 2
Responses of the Semester 3rd Students

s/n	Statements	SA %	A %	N %	DA %	SDA %
1	Traditional method (through cassette) is helpful for better listening comprehension.	0	51	12	36	0
2	Classroom presentations are helpful for listening.	24	30	30	15	0
3	Visual support through multimedia is helpful for listening skills.	33	51	15	3	0
4	Active listening is helpful for gathering specific information.	54	33	12	0	0
5	Tutor's speed is sufficient for comprehension.	12	57	27	3	0
6	Classroom discussion (student's discussion with students and with teachers) is helpful for listening skills.	39	51	9	0	0
7	Pronunciation of the teachers creates no problem.	3	33	30	30	3
8	Web sources help in a better way than classroom listening activities.	0	39	18	42	0
9	Class activities related to listening skills are according to the level of the students.	12	27	36	21	3
10	Students are able to answer listening activities.	15	54	24	6	0
11	Pitch pattern adds to listening comprehension.	21	66	12	0	0
12	Pre-listening helps in the understanding of the lecture.	27	60	6	6	0

The table which appears above depicts the results of 3rd semester's students. It seems that most of the students (51%) agreed with the use of the traditional method of the study, 36% disagreed and only 12% remain neutral. This shows a great demand for this method. It is found from the second question that most of the students voted to the class presentation. And almost 24% of students strongly agreed, 30% agreed, 30%

remained neutral and merely 15% disagreed from this method of study. It can be perceived that students have a great tendency towards class presentation skills. Next statement highlights that 33% students are in favor of learning through multimedia because it is the best method of learning and 51% also have the same opinion, 15% are neutral and only 3% disagreed. This shows that this scientific method is also beneficial in acquiring listening skills. The fourth question depicts that students can gain more while listening actively. In the favor of this idea 54% of students strongly agreed, 33% agreed and just 15% of students marked in a neutral box. The succeeding question reveals that the tutor's speed does play a great role while acquiring listening skills. Merely 12% of the students strongly agreed, 57% of students agreed, 27% of students remained neutral and just 3% of students disagreed. It shows that most of the students have an opinion in favor of this statement. The following statement highlights that 39% of participants strongly agreed upon the need for classroom discussion, 51% agreed and only 9% remain neutral. We can analyze from this result that not even a single student was against this method so we can sight that this method must be utilized in the classroom. The seventh question develops the idea that the speaking style of the teacher makes a great difficulties for students while listening, but in this research almost 33% of students agreed that pronunciation of the teacher is fit for the students, only 3% strongly agreed, 30% neutral, 30% disagreed and just 3% strongly disagreed. Next statement prospects, web sources are not much helpful for listening skills, a number of the student's opinion were not in favor of this method, no one strongly agreed, 39% agreed, 18% neutral and 42% disagreed with the introduction of this method. The proceeding question forecasts that in classroom listening activities must be according to the level of the students, only 12% strongly agreed, 27%] agreed, 36% marked neutral, 21% disagreed and just 3% strongly disagreed. The tenth question throws light on the students' intellectual level: either they are able to answer listening activities or not. For this 15% of students strongly agreed, 54% agreed, 24% neutral, 6% disagreed. The eleventh's idea predicts that pitch pattern plays a tremendous role in listening activities. Results depict that 21% of the students ticked strongly agree, 66% ticked agree, 12% ticked neutral and no one ticked in disagree and strongly disagree portion. The last statement shows that pre-listening skills are helpful for better comprehension. Most of the defendants almost 27% strongly agreed, 60% agreed, 6% neutral and 6% disagreed. The findings of the results are headed below.

The implications of the results gathered from the above analysis are given below:

1. From the above analysis, it can be seen that more than fifty percent of the students have the opinion that traditional method through cassette/CD is appropriate for their listening skills and BBC news are more beneficial for their learning process. It is advised that this method must be introduced in the

- English classroom so that students can get benefit from it.
2. Presentations do play a great role in listening skills. It is depicted that students have countless favor in presentation skills because good speaking is the outcome of good listening. It is suggested that regular presentation activities must be the part of sessions and there must be other debates required to be held in the class and outside the classroom so that students can quench their thirst.
 3. It is generally observed that a man can learn more and more when something is practically performed in front of his eyes. Scientific inventions namely multimedia plays a great role in the English classroom. Through multimedia, they can learn and improve their listening skills. So multimedia must be devised in the classroom because it will help them in improving listening activities.
 4. So far as, the concept of active listening is concerned, more than fifty percent of the students have the sentiments that basic listening skills can be ascertained by focusing on what and how a speaker is saying. A very interesting suggestion is there, the speaker must be present interesting and comprehensive points according to students' level so that the students can practice listening skills, because, at their beginning levels, they may be victimized by various difficulties.
 5. It is seen that the tutor's speed does play a major role while listening. Most of the times, it seems that the tutor's speed can create problems for students. It is very difficult for students to grasp the idea either due to the fast speed of the teachers or low. It is opined that there must be average speed so that students can learn and focus on their listening skills.
 6. The conversation is the best way to learn basic skills. From the above analysis, we have seen that students have great indulgence for this method. In our scenario classroom discussion is not encouraged by the institutions. At the end of class, 15 to 20 minutes must be served for discussion. It is not only meant for the classroom while outside of the classroom. Students must speak in English with each other so that their basic skills can be developed.
 7. At the beginning level, students feel various difficulties that how to pronounce a word and how it is pronounced by the teachers. It is instructed that subjects related to phonetics and phonology must be introduced in the first semester so that students can easily grasp the idea. Some activities related to pronunciation must be introduced in the classroom so that their listening power can be puffed up.
 8. Analyzing this in the light of student's assessment, one is compelled to say that students are exotic about this method because most of the students are not in favor of this. It is recommended that web sources are the best way of learning listening skills. As it is obvious that by talking with native speakers on Skype

our speaking, as well as listening skills, are developed.

9. Whenever there be a need for a new method one must keep in mind the intellectual level of the students. Most of the students opine that classroom activities are according to their level. However, when we do not keep in mind the level, then the results related to listening skills may be problematic.
10. When listening skills will be according to the level of the students then they will be able to answer the listening question. Most of the students are in favor of this statement. So it is acclaimed that student's comprehension can only be ascertained when listening activities will be devised according to their level.
11. As it is clear that students voted in favor of this question because they feel that pitch pattern can be more fruitful in acquiring listening skills. A teacher must have to maintain the level of the students and his tone must be reasonable.
12. In the last part of the analysis is found that students must be familiarized with the topic which the teacher is going to teach. A number of students have the opinion that pre-listening skills can be more productive in second language acquisition. Students feel secure and easily comprehend the topic with whom they are already familiar. So it is suggested that students have to work hard and must read the lesson which will be discussed by the teacher on the very next day.

Conclusion

The study has shown the significance of innovative methods as beneficial for students to effectively listen the English language. Listening skills through innovative methods in education are of equal assistance for the students of 1st and 3rd semesters. The whole data is collected by distributing questionnaires and the responses of the students are highlighted as above. Some possible results are drawn from the data, and it is also suggested to the students that which brands of activities might be worthwhile for them. Study shows that close attention must be paid to the use of various effective innovative technological visual support, online activities, one to one discussion, etc. to enhance the proficiency of effectiveness of listening skill. Careful listening actively engages the participants in the productive thinking process in the class and helps the students to learn and improve the language effectively.

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