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A Scientific Approach to Improve Listening Skills for ESL Learners

Ms. U. Pushpalatha¹, Dr V. Saranya²

Abstract: Listening is an important skill to attain proficiency in the target language, which is also closely interlinked to speaking skills. As listening plays a vital role in learning, it should be followed and monitored thoroughly to excel in this skill. This paper attempts to highlight the significance of the scientific approach in inculcating listening skills through activities. The objectives of this study are 1) to identify the effectiveness of the implementation of the scientific approach to enhance the listening skills of the students, 2) to analyze the students' ability to adapt the new scientific learning styles to develop their listening skills, and 3) to observe the changes in learning and the enrichment in their listening ability. For this research work, a pre-experimental research methodology was adopted and the research was carried out for the first-year engineering students in India. This scientific approach was profoundly scrutinized and analyzed to find out the outcomes of the research. This paper has given evidence and recommended implementing a scientific approach in the learning process of the target language.

Keywords: Learning Styles, Scientific Approach, and Speaking Skill

1.1 Introduction

Listening plays a significant role in the language learning process. As it is an important skill, it must be properly trained to the ESL to get good outcomes in their learning. In India, listening skills have been focused in the last decade, to improve the standard of the learners. Indeed, listening is essential, the approaches can be changed according to the present generation of learners. In the listening process, the learners must reach the stage of active listening, which benefits them to imbibe the information effectively. For this active listening stage, the brain should be active and engaged during the whole process of listening without any distractions and disturbances. To achieve this, the brain of the learners' should be trained regularly to get into practice. For this active listening process, some of the strategies can be used and applied in the classrooms to get the results of this training. Playwright Wilson Mizner has rightly said, "A good listener is not only popular everywhere, but after a while, he gets to know something". Listening

helps to reciprocate and the communication becomes stronger for a good listener. This paper discusses the importance of listening skills and the strategies related to a scientific approach used in the research work are explained clearly with the outcomes of the research work. This research work is carried out for first-year engineering students who hail from Tamilnadu, India.

2.1 Review of Literature

Many researches have been conducted on the improvement of listening skills in terms of English as a second language and foreign language learning. Buck (2001) says despite listening skills being a complex process, the listeners must have wide knowledge to understand and comprehend verbal and non-verbal language. Rost (2002) considers that the students try to analyse the new listening data with their previous knowledge to get the utmost understanding of the listening information. Guo and Wills (2006) state that listening is one of the most challenging skills to receive information from the given data. As Hamouda (2013) words, listening becomes effective when the speaker conveys the messages clearly to the audience, which insists pronunciation takes a part in effective listening. Albay and Yildiz (2015) state that auditory listening includes interpreting and communicating information in a properly understandable manner. Glikjani and Sabouri (2016) express that there are three strategies are involved in listening. There are cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective strategies. From the few reviews of literature from various parts of the country and different periods, it is clear that many linguists have dealt with listening and they made efforts to improve the listening skills of the learners. It is also exposed that they have thought in different dimensions, and used different methodologies to enhance the listening skill among the learners.

3.1 Methodology

This research work was carried out for the first engineering students from the southern part of India. This research aims to grab the attention of the listeners and they listen with interest. For this research, a pre-experimental research methodology was used. One group of students was involved and the strategies used for them. Conducted pre and post-tests for them to get the outcomes and analysis the outcomes with the Likert scale tool. In this section, the following topics are discussed in detail. The topics are the importance of active listening, implementation of scientific approach, pre-test, post-test, research questions, and Likert analysis.

3.2 Importance of Active Listening

Active listening is important to gain more knowledge and undoubtedly it will bring huge changes in the listener's career. This active listening helps to

- Enriching knowledge
- Perform well in career
- Supports in the career to grow faster than others
- Become an Impressive person
- Know new ideologies to solve the issues in the workplace
- Become a good speaker
- Get popularity

This is the first step in this research work, to list out the importance of active listening. In this world, every human wants to become rich, wealthy, popular, gain fame and successful person. These points were shared among them and emphasized the importance of listening in their lives. This is one of the scientific strategies to bring them into the psychological zone to prepare themselves to listen actively. Self-help and self-understanding are the best

ways to bring changes. In this research also, the researcher touched on their inner desires and wishes, which exposed the importance of listening.

3.3 Implementation of Scientific Approaches

The next step of the research was implementing a scientific approach in the listening process. Listening should not be taken place as it is, before listening, the learners should train their brains and prepare mentally for what they are going to listen. This was practiced for the group of students to bring effective listening. To strengthen their brains and their proper functionality certain points are used. There are as follows:

The functions of the brain

The Brain is an essential and also a powerful organ. The brain is responsible for receiving and interpreting the messages. Besides, it also senses the information of signals, sights, sounds, and so on. Moreover, it stores memory and controls every action. The cerebrum, Frontal lobes and Temporal lobes play a major role in the language learning, listening, understanding, and responding process. The cerebrum interprets sounds and evolves reasoning with learning. The frontal lobes are in the front part of our brain which controls speech and intellectual, memory and personality. The temporal lobes are near the ears on each side of our brain which helps to understand the language and interpret the messages. This information is also important for implementing any strategies for the students to get involved.

Stay calm and prepare to listen

Before going to listen anywhere or on any topic, the listeners must prepare their minds to listen well. They should be open-minded and welcome the points. The listeners should be fit mentally and physically to understand the information. This is to be taught to the listeners clearly to understand the importance of preparation of mind before listening activity.

Importance of gaining knowledge

Listening is always greatly helpful in gaining knowledge. All the great leaders, writers, and innovators listened to their surroundings and grasped the information. The listeners must understand how listening to intuition is important the same way listening to the surroundings is also equally important.

Power of listening or speech

The listeners ought to understand the power of listening. If listening happens actively, the listener will become a good speaker. Listening brings clarity to thoughts and speech. They can use appropriate vocabulary and know how to frame sentences. This shows that listening helps to speak the language. This also should be understood by the listeners to become a good listener.

Pre-test and Post-test

The set of video listening activities was conducted for the students for a month and their results. The activities were given to them in a normal way and a pre-test was taken for analyses whereas for the post-test, before going for activities, mentally trained to listen to the videos with full attention. And both were analysed and discussed with evidence. For the classroom activities 1) Steve Jobs commencement speech, 2) Elon musk's interview in the world summit and 2) Rich and Poor Man were displayed. After watching the videos questions were put forth and getting answers from them. The ratio of the students who listened actively was comparatively higher than the pre-test. Post-test students found ways to overcome external and internal distractions and focused on only information.

Table No 1.

Parameters	Pre-test	Post-test	Differences
Listening	35	50	15
Concentration	30	48	18
Critical thinking	28	42	14
Avoid distractions	38	53	15
Mean	32.75	48.25	
Deviation	3.960	4.023	62

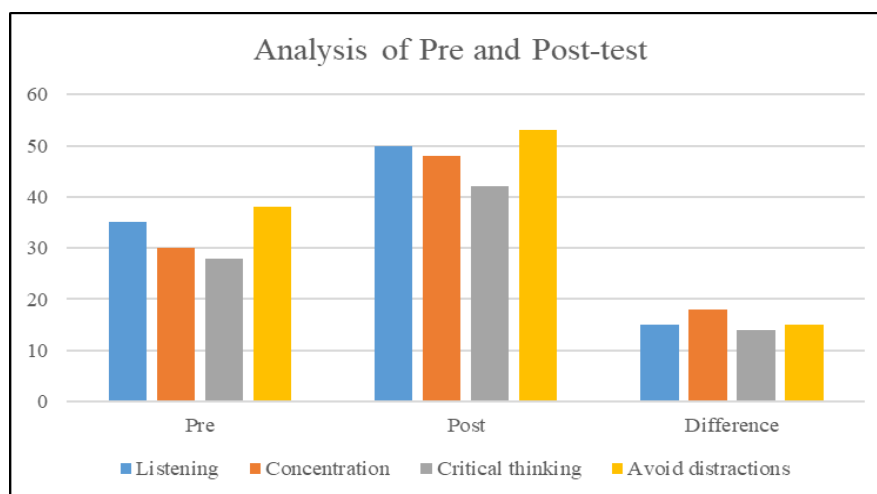


Fig. No. 1

3.4 Research Questions

Research questions are very important to ensure that the research is taken on the right path and the aims are likely to be achieved. The research questions are asked to identify the thought process of listening activities. For this research, the following questions were asked;

- Is the mental preparation helpful to listen with concentration?
- Do you know how to handle distractions?
- Do you think that you are actively listening?

3.5 Likert Scale Analysis

Three research questions were asked and analysed with the Likert scale. The below table shows that there is a remarkable change in the learners' behaviour in listening activities. Psychological comfort and self-understanding are essential to bring changes in them. For all three research questions, learners find changes in them. Due to time constraints, only a few questions were asked to the randomly selected students. Mental preparation is very important in the listening activities. So, this kind of preparation will be useful for them in the future also. Distractions also gradually come down, this is again an important aspect of listening activities. The students must know where they are struggling, then only they can stop the distraction. And the last question, the students must believe that they are

listening actively. This gives confidence and belief in them and to listen and learn more.

Table No:2

Respondents	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Q1	64%	36%	0%	0%
Q2	68%	20%	8%	4%
Q3	32%	60%	4%	4%

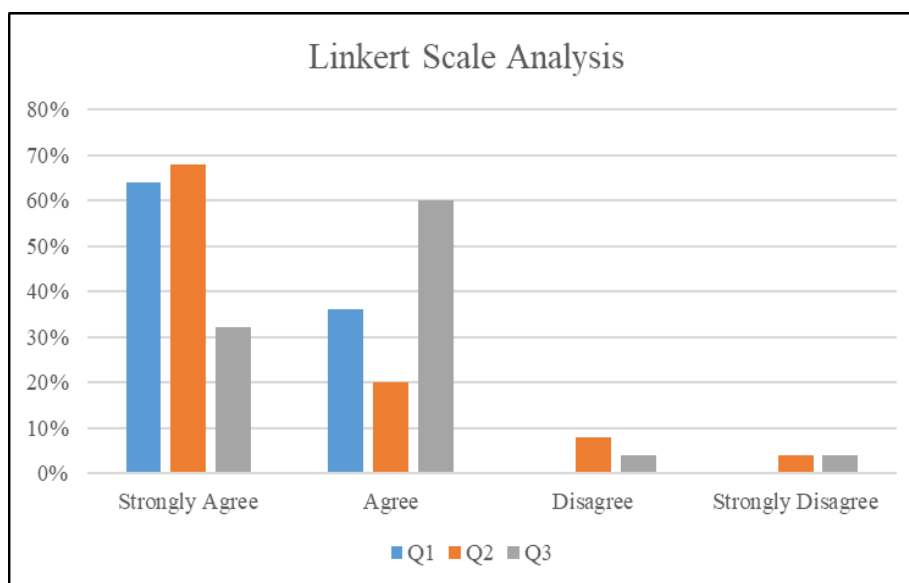


Fig. No. 2

4.1 Findings

From the above research questions and Likert's analysis, it is clear that the research work has brought some changes in the learning and listening process. If this is practiced, the learners will get into practice for effective listening. Listening is the basis for all the learning and communication processes. So, this approach helps them to listen and communicate well in their career.

5.1 Conclusion

As a teacher, we should incorporate new strategies and methodologies often for the betterment of the learners'. Also, the strategies or any new approaches should be framed according to the necessity of the learners'. For example, each individual is different, their socio-economic or cultural, geographic, EQ, and IQ are different. So consider all the aspects and design methodology for the benefit of the students. Pushpalatha. U says that learner's continuous practice will help them to get success. As the words of Pushpalatha, continuous listening practice will lead them to communicate well. As a teacher, we insist on this aspect and make them follow in their learning process.

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