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# Enhancing Listening Skills in Pakistani ESL Classrooms: Effective Strategies and Practices

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## Abstract

The study aims to investigate the teaching strategies used by ESL teachers to improve their listening skills among the different secondary schools in Pakistan. The study followed a qualitative research design and it investigated the teaching strategies used by the ESL teachers to improve the listening skills of secondary school students in Pakistan. It involved a series of semi-structured interviews as the main method of data collection. This study yields, ever so important, information about the teaching methods employed by teachers. The key themes that emerged from semi-structured interviews of 15 experienced ESL are interactive teaching methods, technology, real-life exposure, and addressing linguistic challenges. The results are consistent with the previously discussed literature review which shows that the proposed strategies contribute to developing listening comprehension. The implications of this study are helpful to further improve ESL education for similar such context along educators and policy makers.

**Keywords:** ESL, listening skills, teaching strategies, secondary education, interactive methods, technology in education, linguistic challenges

## Introduction

Motivation for learning English is of great importance in contemporary world (Akram & Abdelrady, 2023; Shamim, 2008). For these reasons, and because English bestrides academia and technology, business and international communication, to succeed globally in professional terms, fluency in English is as much a basic tool as a sewing-knife in Italy or the sandals of an Indian sadhu (Akram et al., 2022a; Li & Akram, 2023). In education field, especially in non-native English speaking countries such as Pakistan, English language compactification is not only an academic necessity, but it is a ticket to worldwide opportunities and an access to immense treasures of global knowledge as well (Malik & Pervaiz, 2023).

In Pakistan, English learning has long been regarded as a key to educational success, and a cornerstone of national education systems and policies (Akram and Yang, 2021; Akram, 2020). Although much of the program focuses on the English language, students still experience great difficulties in learning the language, particularly listening (Shamim, 2008). Hence, listening as a macro skill of language should be implanted in mind the role of effective communication and understanding (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). By helping students to actively participate in academic discussions, listen closely to lectures, and understand multimedia content, SPARC supports spoken language (Kim, 2013).

When it comes to the process of people acquiring languages, listening is a very important component. It has been observed that children make deliberate efforts to mimic the words and sounds of speech that they hear in their environment (Roberts, 2017). The ability to listen appears to become considerably more important in terms of speaking English language. Listening ability is the first stage of learning any language in the acquisition process. Furthermore, it serves as a medium to interact with others at international level, which, according to Hwang et al. (2014), helps to continue the lengthy and laborious way of learning. According to Qiu (2017), learners can enhance their level of pronunciation by watching native speakers and listening to them talk. On the other hand, it appears to become a dimness of Asian pupils as they concentrate on increasing their reading and writing skills. However, teachers at schools have recently become increasingly concerned with how to enhance students' listening abilities. According to Ismail and Aziz's 2020 research, despite the fact that many language classes include listening instruction, experts continue to believe that teachers should be encouraged to perform a great deal of research in order to make the teaching skills more successful.

Generally speaking, there is a positive correlation between the listening techniques that teachers impart, such as listening to the keywords, the ability to predict, etc., and the listening methods that students utilize (Kasim & Luwiti, 2020). Additionally, students may also find helpful if they start listening plans since the listening skills that they utilized helped them achieve success in their academic endeavors (Khan & Karim, 2014). Listening tactics are the strategies adopted by non-native speakers of a

particular language, when they face problems in listening situations. Additionally, while learning a language that they are not already familiar with, learners put the listening strategies to use. Predicting the concept, grasp the gist, identifying the notices, listening carefully each point, and concluding the understanding are some of the several listening skills that teachers typically teach their students (Yang, 2019).

It is true that students' academic achievement is directly correlated to their ability to demonstrate practical listening comprehension skills (Ismail & Aziz, 2020). On the other hand, it appears that it does not contain a large number of publications that are relevant to the topic and explore English listening strategies between instructor instruction and student use. There are still a significant number of pupils in Taiwan that have difficulty with listening to English. The ability to read and write in English is the primary focus of instructors in Taiwan (Chou, 2015).

Mostly it is because teachers do not spend much time on improving the listening skills of the students. But it is something that is waning in the field of English learning, although fortunately the importance of English listening skill is slowly beginning to be heard. Inspiration of the Day Many universities, in fact allow students to enroll for a course on how to develop the skill to listen better. However, there is only a small body of research that explores differences in English listening tactics used by students and those used by teachers. With this in mind, the current study sought to explore the teaching strategies which the ESL teachers in Pakistan adopt to develop the listening skills of their students. The goal is to identify what strategies and ways have worked in Pakistan - yes, there are specific challenges and opportunities which are part of the educational landscape of the country.

### **Literature Review**

The act of listening and comprehending is not only a reflexive and passive involvement that is both intricate and active at some point. While going through this procedure, the listener is required to differentiate between sounds, comprehend words, terminologies, and linguistic structures, resolve issues of stress and intonation, and maintain all of the aforementioned things. As an additional point of interest, we are required to understand it in the context of the immediate and more significant social background speech. It was Osada (2004). According to Liao and Yeldham (2015), the theory of second language acquisition incorporates the concept of listening to spoken language, which involves a mechanism of dynamic and engaged processes that determine the level of acquisition and comprehension. In the context of the demonstration of a wide-range of conduits, the achievement of listening is evaluated based on the appropriate response to the questions or tasks that are presented. According to Ghonivita et al. (2021), educators tend to concentrate on the outcomes of their listening abilities rather than listening to themselves. Within the framework of this idea, the process of listening comprehension is regarded as a pleasurable one. According to Newton and Nation's research from 2020, people concentrate on choosing the auditory input part, building meaning from a passage, and trying to match everything they hear to the knowledge they already possess. Research conducted by Roberts (2017) suggests that there are two levels of activities that are involved in the process of listening to a foreign language. In the first place, there is the recognition level, which entails recognizing the structural inter-relationships between the words and phrases, temporal classifications and categorizations, reasonable and amending terms, and unneeded exclamation expressions, while not expanding anything to create sentences. Furthermore, the second factor is the degree of selection that the audience members extract from the interaction or communication. These elements include the primary point that the communication is trying to convey. According to Roberts (2017), this method requires listeners to concentrate on a particular sound grouping while simultaneously perceiving other individuals aurally without preserving their perceptions. Ramzan et al. (2023) have discussed the ESL learners' motivation in light of sustainable development goals which is enhanced in Ramzan et al. (2023). Ramzan et al. (2023), further enhanced ESL learners' motivation through social media which is confirmed in Chen and Ramzan (2024). Ramzan, M., & Alahmadi, A., (2024) evaluated the effect of syntax instruction in the development of complex sentences in ESL writings.

### **Listening Strategies**

Listening comprehension strategies are said to take into consideration the learning tactics and approaches as per their theoretical background, rendering information from the western study of foreign language. As a consequence of this, a great number of academics are looking for learning strategies associated with listening comprehension (Chou, 2015). According to Milliner and Dimoski (2024), learning strategies are abilities, techniques, or deliberate activities that students take in order to enhance their learning and retain knowledge that is both linguistic and content-based. Metacognitive and cognitive strategies are the two primary categories that Roberts (2017) recognizes within the range of cognitive activities that are associated with language learning. The methods that supervise, manage, or instruct the process of language learning are referred to as metacognitive language learning strategies. There is a connection between metacognitive methods and the thinking that occurs during the learning process. This thinking involves developing, monitoring, and evaluating. Nevertheless, the utilization of metacognitive methods will be rendered obsolete in the absence of the implementation of appropriate cognitive strategies. During the learning mission, cognitive methods are utilized to either operate the learning content or to make use of a certain ability. In addition, they have included the third category, which is known as socio-affective techniques, in order to discuss the collaboration that occurs between the language learner and their classmates, inquire about clarification from the instructor, or make use of particular abilities in order to reduce the anxiety that they experience (Atmowardoyo et al., 2021). There are a few key differences between the cognitive methods and other learning processes. According to Tran and Duong's research from 2020, these are the behaviors that learners engage in in order to absorb the language input and acquire information.

The Related Research In the research that Bao (2017) carried out, the author developed a questionnaire that was distributed to 174 students who were not majoring in English and 35 teachers who were employed by the College English Department at a university. The author collected 170 and 34 valuable questionnaires respectively. This study came to the conclusion that there is a positive association between the tactics that teachers assist and the strategies that students utilize. This was the result that

was reached. On the other hand, there is a gap present in the implementation of the social-affective strategy. Both cognitive and social/affective strategies receive the same amount of attention while being taught by teachers. Students, on the other hand, do not make frequent use of social and affective language. According to Ismail and Aziz's research from 2020, "the deployment of listening methods and learning style can become a predictor of listening capacity because of the statistically significant association between the two characteristics." In addition, the findings of the research that Ekayati (2020) carried out demonstrate that teaching students how to improve their speaking performance and evaluating students' speaking performance ought to be a process rather than a product. In this study, a comparison is made between the several scoring methods that are now preferred for teaching and evaluating the speaking abilities of students. The entirety of the grading method can be beneficial to teachers in terms of both schooling and evaluating the articulating show of their students. According to Chou (2015), placing an emphasis on listening comprehension and listening methods can assist students in becoming more successful in language learning by allowing them to make the most of the language information they receive.

### Methodology

The study followed a qualitative research design and it investigated the teaching strategies used by the ESL teachers to improve the listening skills of secondary school students in Pakistan. The reason for the selection of the qualitative approach is that it is powerful enough to produce enough detail about the insights and embedded experiences of the teachers in their natural settings (Maxwell 2008).

The study involved a series of semi-structured interviews as the main method of data collection. It proposed this design to offer freedom in the conversation (to tell other authentic case studies and reflections) but at the same time structure to address the themes (Magaldi & Berler, 2020).

### Participants

The sample for this current study was secondary school ESL teachers from various schools in Pakistan. We employed purposive sampling for the selection of teachers who had at least three years' experience in English Language teaching at the secondary level. This criterion helped to ensure that the included participants had enough working experience to contribute to relevant teaching strategies (Rai & Thapa, 2015). 15 teachers from 15 different secondary schools across the secondary schools were the participants of the study. We sought to include public and private schools, with a diversity of schools to capture a broad spectrum of perspectives and practices in a range of pedagogical contexts.

### Data Collection and Analysis

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were used to collect raw data from the subjects. These interviews utilized an interview protocol designed specifically for the study. The protocol consisted of open-ended questions developed to extract elaborate accounts of the strategies used to teach this skill, difficulties experienced, and perceived efficacy.

Each interview ranged between 45 to 60 minutes and was audio-recorded with the permission of the participants to provide an accurate capture of the data. Field notes were gathered concurrently as well to note non-verbal communication or other behaviors. All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim to allow for comprehensive analysis. We conducted a thematic analysis to discover and interpret repetitive patterns (themes) within the data.

### Ethical Considerations

The study was characterized by ethical aspects. Ethical clearance from the respective institutional review board was obtained prior to data collection. All participants gave written informed consent after receiving information about the study, including the purpose and possible risks, and were told that there would be no consequences if they withdrew. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, all participants were identified using pseudonyms and no identifying information appeared within the transcript or final report.

### Trustworthiness

Several strategies were used to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. Credibility was established by the persistent involvement with the participants and the triangulation of data sources (Gunawan, 2015). To ensure the validity of the data collected and interpretation of the findings, we performed member checking with a few participants, i.e. presented data to participants to verify predilection of message and interpretation. Detailed descriptions of the research context and participants were supplied to ensure that the transferability of the results to other settings could be assessed by the reader. Dependability and confirmability were also strengthened by keeping an audit trail detailing the research process, and decisions made during the study.

### Results

The qualitative analysis from the interviews of ESL teachers in secondary schools generated mainly four themes concerning the strategies for improving students' listening skills. These themes demonstrate the various ways in which educators are dealing with - and struggling with - the conditions they face. Major themes (Interactive Teaching Methods, Use of Technology, Real-Life Exposure, Addressing Linguistic Challenges) were derived.

#### 1. Interactive Teaching Methods

Teachers emphasized that to enhance the listening skills of learners, their involvement in the process of learning should be increased, which could be achieved only with the help of interactive methods. Such methods typically involved group discussions, mini role-plays, listening exercises or other "active" responses from students. Few of the teachers tell,

Teacher 1. Especially, I teach by group discussions and debates. It not only tenders good listening to the students but also demands them to put their points across well.

Teacher 2. Role-play exercises work very well. Students have to listen to each other to address the scene correctly, thus enhancing their listening skills.

## 2. Use of Technology

This was another major theme, the integration of technology in the classroom. Listen: To strengthen the understanding of the students, teachers also helped to achieve the ability to improve the narration of the student on the online platform, as well as the development of the narration through similar online applications in the French class, and also Online exercises. According to a few teachers,

Teacher 3: "I rarely practice listening with language-learning apps and websites to go on with Novel in Listening Course. These tools are highly interactive and they deliver feedback instantly and make the students develop faster.

Teacher 4: Videos and Podcasts have a great impact on lessons. This provides exposure to different native accents and speech speed which is vital in enhancing their listening skills.

## 3. Real-Life Exposure

Teaching also stressed the necessity of encountering the real sounds of English in other contexts not only in the classroom setting. This exposure ranged from bringing in guest speakers and organizing field trips to encouraging kids to participate in English-speaking events. According to the teachers,

Teacher 2: "We do have some guest speakers that come and talk to the students. It helps them to know the diversity of accent and understand better to the people because it enhances their listening.

Teacher 5: Bringing students to situations that requires English (going to the museum with English tourists) is another tip so that they can use their listening abilities that they train.

## 4. Tackling the Language Problem

They confronted some of the nittiest, grittiest details of linguistic obstacles students actually encounter. This entailed an emphasis on the problem areas such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and structure that inhibit effective listening. According to few teachers,

Teacher #5: "A lot of students have trouble with hearing the differences in accents and pronunciations. I practice by listening to different audio materials that contain these differences.

English teacher 7: "In one of the lessons we usually go through tasks with complex vocabulary and grammatical constructions. With these areas improved, students can more easily understand spoken English.

These interview responses only scratched the surface of the strategies used by ESL teachers to improve the listening skills of their secondary school students. These methods, which include interactivity, technology, live exposure, and the solution of specific linguistic problems represent a complete language teaching approach. This approach will ultimately help to enhance English language proficiency by satisfying the listening needs of the students.

## Discussion

This study yields, ever so important, information into the teaching methods employed by ESL teachers in Pakistan to ameliorate the listening skills of their secondary school students. These findings are in line with the previous research on the ESL education along with the recent literature, representing the detailed and in-depth understanding of some effective pedagogical practices in the Pakistani context.

One of the strategies emerged in the interviews with these teachers, was that all of them advocated the use of interactive teaching tools like group activities and performance of roles. The result is in line with former research postulating that interactive tasks work well for language learning. The idea of Turgunova and Abdurahimovna (2023) that interactive methods provide a more active involvement of the audience, better, this is undoubtedly true. Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social development (sociocultural theory) also heavily favours that social interaction is key to cognitive development -- this includes the social benefits of language development. In this study, teachers are encouraging students to converse/dialogue and role-play restoring a setting where students have the opportunity to develop and hone listening skills within a group.

Another theme was the use of technology in teaching. With the improvement of the student's listening skills, the teachers deployed digital tools like languages uses apps, videos, and podcasts, etc. This is also supported by many other studies which highlighted the role of technology in higher education (Akram et al., 2021a, 2021b) and language learning (Abdelrady & Akram, 2022). In their study, Rintaningrum (2023) identified that tools enable technology-based instruction to provide various types of authentic listening experiences that promote the development of listening proficiency. Using multimedia resources exposes the students to different accents, speeds, and contexts in English while watching, therefore, it would make some positive influence on listening skill too.

The teachers also stressed the necessity of involving students with as much authenticity in English as possible. Their approach also comports with the experiential learning theory noted by for example Passarelli and Kolb (2023) according to which learning is best when it involves real-life experience. Through guest speakers, field trips, and engaging English-speaking events, teachers are providing students the ability to use what they hear in true-to-life situations. Therefore, learning a language through immersion helps form a well-rounded comprehension of a language, which increases students' proficiency in the language overall (Chavez, 2022).

This included focusing on specific linguistic difficulties, for instance in the pronunciation of individual sounds as well as word choice and grammatical structure (possibly related to the specific items experienced as challenging). Research has demonstrated



that focused teaching of these areas can greatly reduce these listening difficulties. For example, Darcy (2018) explains that to listen better, learning pronunciation and vocabulary details is important. When teachers address these difficult areas in their classes, students slowly learn the skills to understand spoken English naturally with more accuracy and independence.

The standards for ESL teachers and the methods they use also match well with the pedagogical theories and practices found in the field of language education. By using interactive methods, they integrate technology and real-life exposure and address specific problems that the students face in listening skills are how these teachers are clearly getting the best out of their students in listening. The results of this study validate previous research and add a local insight on ESL teaching strategies in Pakistan. These results can help direct future pedagogical decisions, teacher training programs, and policy-making, to continue to strengthen ESL education in analogous contexts.

## Conclusions

Conclusively, the study endorses that ESL teachers cogently practice diversified strategies to boost the listening skills of secondary school students. Using interactive tools, technology, real-life examples, and focusing on the distinct language challenges faced by learners, these teachers are able to ground their work in established pedagogical theories and evidence-based practices. The various implications arrive at through this study direct us towards the significance of multi-faceted venue in ESL instruction with indispensable contributory recommendations for improvement in ESL scaffolding in reading comprehension in alike setting, as well as in language curriculum organizer and planner, training of ESL educator, and promotion of educational policies and programs.

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