

Active Listening and Argumentative Skills

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Abstract

The current research examines the influence of active listening on the enhancement of oral argumentative skills in university level students. Based on the experiment involving 100 Masters English students of COMSATS University Islamabad, the study analyses five main variables: confidence, body language, concreteness, retention of information and multidimensionality. The design used was pre and post with participants completing active listening interventions. Statistical analysis (one-way ANOVA) demonstrated a significant increase in all parameters. It is shown that: active listening is not only essential to language learning but also transformative in the development of students' critical thinking and oral argumentation skills in the academic domains.

Keywords: Active Listening, Oral Argumentative Skills, University Students, Critical Thinking, Language Learning, COMSATS University Islamabad, Confidence, Body Language, Information Retention, Multidimensionality, Pre-Post

Experimental Design, One-Way ANOVA, English Language Education, Higher Education, Communication Skills.

Introduction

Argumentation skills are fundamental to both academic and professional communication. Although considerable research has investigated listening and written argumentation, there has been less examination of the extent to which active listening contributes to the development of oral argumentative competence. Attentive listening, when attention, perception and comprehension are engaged, makes an important contribution to the process of learning and understanding various linguistic units (phonology, morphology, pragmatics, etc.). In addition to linguistic understanding, listening makes it possible for students to process complicated information, express argument, and deliver ideas with greater clarity and confidence.

It has been found that previous studies associating active listening with better comprehension, critical thinking and academic achievement (Karasakaloğlu & Bulut, 2018; Smith et al., 2020), however. However, the extent to which it could improve oral argumentative skills (particularly in real-time classroom discussions) has been largely overlooked. This research fills this gap by analyzing the effects that a targeted intervention in active listening has on five dimensions of oral argumentation: confidence, body language, concreteness, retention of information and multidimensionality.

Through a pre-test/post-test experimental design, it examines the oral argumentative performance of Master's in English students at COMSATS University Islamabad, and furnishes empirical evidence that active listening can become an essential pedagogical strategy in the cultivation of persuasive communicators.

Research Questions

1. What is the impact of active listening on the structure and coherence of oral argumentative skills among postgraduate English students?
2. How does active listening influence vocabulary usage and error reduction during oral academic debates?

Objectives

1. To evaluate the effect of active listening on improving the structure and coherence of oral arguments.
2. To assess the influence of active listening on vocabulary development and reduction of errors in spoken argumentation.

Literature Review

Active listening is highly essential in language learning and acquisition. It has a great impact upon various concerns of learning. Syntax, phonology, morphology and pragmatics are affected by it. Listening by Field (2010) is simply such a process that becomes a part and turns out to be an input for acquiring other skills. Inviting learners into spontaneous listening, real-life conversations, informal interviews, and media content as well as interactive listening tasks-will help internalize the grammatical structure of how much vocabulary, pronunciation, and natural rhythm of their speech sounds.

Such linguistic elements as phonological awareness, morphological knowledge, and pragmatic comprehension are crucial for understanding the structure, meaning, and use of language in varying contexts. The active cultivation of these qualities through listening makes the acquisition and practical application of language constructions more relevant for learners. Studies have shown that educating students in active listening enhances their listening skill and reading ability (Karasakaloğlu & Bulut, 2018). Thus, active listening has a strong association with

the academic performance and cognitive development of students. The research studies done by Smith et al. (2020) mentioned active listening that was trained amongst undergraduate students and then compared with a control group. It was found that the experimental group got significantly higher results in both comprehension and retention of academic materials. This finding shows active listening as a cognitive strategy to facilitate the acquisition and processing of complex information. By engaging actively with the lecture content, questioning, and seeking clarification of confusing areas, students stand to retain and subsequently apply that knowledge in meaningful ways (Dietz-Uhler et al., 2001).

It has also shown that active listening training powerfully affects the way learners construct arguments and counterarguments as shown by Greenhalgh and Rogers (2010) were concerning secondary school students. Yet another finding is that active listening contributes to the improvement of students' critical thinking and reasoning abilities. In similar studies, Dietz-Uhler, Bishop-Clark, and Howard (2001) found a positive correlation between active listening skills and college students' critical-thinking abilities, also noting the cognitive benefits of attentive listening. Active listening can improve learners' understanding of phonology, morphology, and pragmatics in the course of learning language (Ambubuyog et al., 2023). Active listening interventions have paved the way for students from different backgrounds including those whose needs stem from disability or language barrier.

All in all, active listening remains a critical, yet slightly neglected area associated with language education and training in communication skills. It has been found in most studies that targeted intervention programs have a positive effect on the listening behavior of students, although it seems that more research will have to be carried out to support retention and application over the long term. Active listening could be essential and transformative in developing oral argumentative

skills among university students, thereby bridging a significant gap, one that has remained relatively unexplored in communication literature. Earlier studies concentrated almost exclusively on active listening's effect on written argumentative skills, with a multitude of studies examining how listening affects the writing strategies, idea development, and textual coherence thereof, leaving an incredibly glaring absence in exploring how this vital communicative skill aids in oral argumentation, real-time, face-to-face academic interactions (Bodie, 2018).

Methodology

In terms of the study sample, 100 students from the Master's in English program at COMSATS University Islamabad participated in the research. The sample was selected through convenience sampling, which is a one of the non-probability sampling techniques and which is a way of selecting participants from the target population based on ease of access (Golzar, Jawad & Tajik, Omid & Noor, Shagofah, 2022).The selected participants were already familiar with academic debates and linguistic theory, which made them an ideal population for evaluating the impact of active listening on oral argumentation. This sample ensured that the participants had the necessary background knowledge to engage in academic discussions and debates, thus providing a strong foundation for assessing the effectiveness of the active listening intervention.

Research Design

The research employed experimental design (pre-test & post-test) to investigate the impact of active listening on the oral argumentative skills of university students. The experimental group underwent a structured intervention aimed at enhancing their active listening abilities through targeted exercises and activities. The oral argumentative skills of the sample were assessed by the linguists, before and after the experiment. Assessment of oral argumentative skills

was based on following variables:

- **Confidence:** Confidence level of the speaker while presenting arguments.
- **Body Language:** Usage of non-verbal signs to communicate the arguments properly.
- **Concreteness:** Being specific and definite rather than vague and general during argumentation.
- **Information Retention:** Focus and strength of memory.
- **Multi-Dimensionality:** Ordering the arguments in a variety of dimensions with multiple perspectives to target relevant audience through different modes.

Discussion and Analysis

Table 1: One-way ANOVA (Pretest and Posttest data

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Confidence	Between Groups	18.322	5	3.664	12.48	0
	Within Groups	27.605	94	0.294		
	Total	45.928	99			
Information Retention	Between Groups	25.852	5	5.17	21.182	0
	Within Groups	22.945	94	0.244		
	Total	48.797	99			
Body Language	Between Groups	21.831	5	4.366	18.558	0
	Within Groups	22.116	94	0.235		
	Total	43.948	99			
Concreteness	Between Groups	23.748	5	4.75	17.802	0
	Within Groups	25.079	94	0.267		
	Total	48.827	99			
Multidimensionality	Between Groups	22.221	5	4.444	17.206	0
	Within Groups	24.279	94	0.258		
	Total	46.5	99			

ANOVA shows that all the groups were statistically different on each of the variables- Confidence, Body Language, Concreteness, Information Retention and

Multidimensionality. The significance is shown through the attained p value equal to zero for all the studied variables. If the p-value is less than or equal to the alpha level (typically 0.05), it indicates that the result is statistically significant. This means that the observed effect is unlikely to have occurred by chance alone, providing support for the significance of the induced intervention (Triola, 2018). There was a significant impact on Confidence ($F=12.478$, $p<0.05$), which seems to suggest that those individuals who actively listen are more likely to be confident when arguing orally. Forms of body language were also significantly influenced ($F=18.558$, $p<0.05$); thus, skills in listening positively contribute to communicating using non-verbal cues and body language as part of persuasive speaking. Finally, both Concreteness ($F=17.802$, $p<0.05$) and Multidimensionality ($F=17.206$, $p<0.05$) also show significant variation, indicating listening skills contribute to reinforcing a concrete, well-rounded argument presentation.

The one-way ANOVA of the pre-test and post-test data unequivocally proves the significant effect of active listening on several critical dimensions of oral argumentative abilities. The statistical results are negative in that, all items investigate to highlight clear improvement across aspects in argumentation with p-values of 0 ($p < 0.05$) showing such occurrences as very statistically significant. This goes on to show that active listening puts a very significant effect not only in communication but also in improving quality and depth of arguments.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of variables recorded pre-test

	Confidence (1-5)	Body Language (1-5)	Concreteness (1-5)	Information Retention (1-5)	Multidimensionality (1-5)
N	100	100	100	100	100
Mean	2.34	2.125	2.16	2.112	2.04
Std. Error of Mean	0.000157	0.000589	0.000238	0.000720	0.001444
Std. Devi Ation	0.01570	0.00589	0.00238	0.00720	0.01444
Variance	0.000246	0.000480	0.000637	0.000192	0.000208

The descriptive statistics in Table 2 describe the pre-test evaluation of five variables using a Likert scale (1-5). The mean scores indicate overall low outcomes, with "Confidence" (2.34), scoring highest and "Multidimensionality" (2.04) lowest. The standard deviations are relatively low, suggesting consistent responses among participants, with the highest variability in Confidence" (0.000986) and the least in "Information Retention" (0.00720). The standard errors of the means are minimal, reflecting reliable averages for the sample size (N=100). Variances are standard across variables, showing balanced distributions. Overall, the data suggests a normally low performance pre-test with slight variations across evaluated aspects.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of variables recorded post-test

	Confidence (1-5)	Body Language (1-5)	Concreteness (1-5)	Information Retention (1-5)	Multidimensionality (1-5)
N	100	100	100	100	100
Mean	3.635	3.805	3.815	3.805	3.9
Std. Error of Mean	0.06811	0.06663	0.07023	0.0647	0.06853
Std. Deviation	0.68111	0.66627	0.70229	0.64704	0.68534
Variance	0.46	0.444	0.493	0.419	0.47

The descriptive statistics in Table 3 summarize the post-test evaluation of five variables using a Likert scale (1-5). The mean scores indicate overall positive outcomes, with "Multidimensionality" (3.9) scoring highest and "Confidence" (3.635) lowest. The standard deviations are relatively low, suggesting consistent responses among participants, with the highest variability in "Concreteness" (0.493) and the least in "Information Retention" (0.419). The standard errors of the means are minimal, reflecting reliable averages for the sample size (N=100). Variances are moderate across variables, showing balanced distributions. Overall, the data suggests a good performance post-test with slight variations across evaluated aspects.

Findings

This study employed a pre-test and post-test experimental design to assess the influence of active listening on the oral argumentative skills of 100 Master's in English students at COMSATS University Islamabad. The participants were selected through convenience sampling and were already familiar with academic debates and linguistic theory, making them an ideal population for evaluating the impact of active listening on oral argumentation. The study focused on five key variables confidence, body language, concreteness, information retention and multidimensionality.

One-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the pre-test and post-test scores across these variables. The results indicated statistically significant differences for all variables:

- **Confidence:** $F(5, 94) = 12.478, p < 0.05$
- **Body Language:** $F(5, 94) = 18.558, p < 0.05$
- **Concreteness:** $F(5, 94) = 17.802, p < 0.05$
- **Information Retention:** $F(5, 94) = 21.182, p < 0.05$
- **Multidimensionality:** $F(5, 94) = 17.206, p < 0.05$

These findings suggest that active listening significantly enhances all five aspects of oral argumentation.

Pre-test and post-test mean scores for each variable were as follows:

- **Confidence:** Pre-test: 2.34, Post-test: 3.635
- **Body Language:** Pre-test: 2.125, Post-test: 3.805
- **Concreteness:** Pre-test: 2.16, Post-test: 3.815
- **Information Retention:** Pre-test: 2.112, Post-test: 3.805
- **Multidimensionality:** Pre-test: 2.04, Post-test: 3.9

These results indicate a notable improvement in all variables following the active listening intervention.

Final Thoughts

The study's findings underscore the significant role of active listening training in enhancing various facets of oral argumentative skills among university students. The substantial improvements observed in confidence, body language, concreteness, information retention, and multidimensionality highlight the effectiveness of active listening interventions in academic settings.

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