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## Research Article

### Active Listening: Its Impact on Language Learning and Understanding of Education Students

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#### ABSTRACT

In learning a new language, there are four macro skills that a learner must develop and use: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. In academic environments such as schools, these macro skills are taught and improved every day to suit the needs of learners. Language learners are often trained when or how they should talk; however, learners are seldom taught how they should listen. This descriptive quantitative study revolved around the utility of listening, how it affects upon the acquired macro skill, specifically, active listening to education students specializing in English from a state institution in Panay Island, Western Visayas, Philippines, as well as its impact on their language learning and understanding. Findings revealed that active listening is vital in the language learning and acquisition with its effects found on multiple aspects of the learning process. It had an underlying impact on phonology, morphology, and pragmatics. It is implied that active listening as an underrated skill should be attended to by language teachers who take charge in teaching macro skills in communication.

**Keywords:** *Active listening, Language education, Language learning, Language understanding*

#### Introduction

Listening is one of the basic macro skills in communication that facilitates language acquisition and proficiency. But this is not given much attention in the teaching and learning process until the more recent years when active listening has finally been brought into the research spectrum. It is now seen as a necessity in language learning and understanding after

the implication was made that priority should be given to the effectiveness of teaching and using language skills that include active listening skills rather than focusing solely on the aspects of language itself. Aside from the different organizations and programs implemented by numerous professionals in boosting the active listening skills of students, forums, seminars, or simply symposiums are conducted to uplift

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students' knowledge about the matter. However, when it comes to raising concerns or summarizing what had been tackled, many failed to grasp the main idea as they failed to listen attentively.

In the history of language acquisition, the four macro skills – listening, reading, speaking, and writing – play important roles in learning a language and developing the students' comprehension skills. Most research studies mainly focus on reading, writing, and speaking as skills needed in language learning. This is because, before the 1970s, listening was taken only as a receptive skill in language learning (Hamouda, 2012). But language learning is such a complex process that needs a lot of work for both teachers and students. Traditionally, when teaching a language, teachers focus more on developing learners' verbal skills, specifically, speaking skills. But non-verbal communication skill such as listening is also an important part of the learning process and serves as a bridge to other skills and subskills that stem from it (Hanna, 2012). It is an important language skill when one wants to learn a second language. But despite its importance, language learners consider listening as the most difficult language skill to learn (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016).

Active listening has issues and impacts on the language acquisition and comprehension of students. In attempting to investigate the listening problems of a group of first-year English major students, Hamouda (2012) has established that accent, pronunciation, speed of speech, insufficient vocabulary, as well as the different accent of speakers, their lack of concentration, and anxiety were among the listening problems identified. Thus, researchers have concluded that to understand aural information, listeners must use effective listening strategies. Such strategies are particularly significant in second language learning. Due to the lack of them, the student's listening comprehension becomes problematic, challenging, and ineffective (Hanna, 2012). After all, introducing listening, specifically active listening, before language learning helps to form the idea of what the language may sound like or be heard (Ismatovna, 2020). As a receptive skill that first develops in the human being, listening initiates language awareness. The ability to listen to the

target language results in the improvement of one's language ability. The sound, rhythm, intonation, and stress of the language can only be perfectly adapted through listening (Renukadevi, 2014).

Active listening has also a positive and negative impact on language learning and understanding. According to Bonwell and Eison (in Singh et al., 2020), students participate actively when they are engaged in an activity besides passively listening to a lecture in a teacher-centered classroom. Local studies also showed that the active listeners showed enthusiasm and interest in their lessons and actively participated in class. It means that students in their class find that active listening motivated them to participate in classroom discussions and activities (Montebon & Orleans, 2021).

It is hypothesized that active listening has a significant impact on language learning and understanding among education students as this would help them achieve proper pronunciation, vocabulary, word stress, as well as syntax, and the perception of how the messages are transmitted depending on their accent or the tone of the voice. It also stimulates the sense of awareness in which the stress, accent, and sound of a language are acclimated. Thus, this study aimed at finding out the impact of active listening on the language learning and understanding of education students specializing in English enrolled during the second term of the academic year 2021-2022 at a state institution in Panay Island in the Western Visayas region of the Philippines. Specifically, this paper attempted to establish the impact of active listening on the language learning and understanding of education students, as well as on the language components of language learning. It would also find out the positive and negative impacts of active listening to language learning and understanding of the education students.

## Methods

This study employed the quantitative research design, particularly the descriptive approach. Quantitative research design is a method where variables are measured using statistical operations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Particularly, the approach used was

descriptive to describe the impact of active listening on language learning and understanding among education students specializing in English.

The respondents were 25 purposively selected education students specializing in English enrolled in a state university in Panay Island, Western Visayas region in the Philippines during the second semester of the academic year 2021-2022.

The study involved the use of an expert-validated researcher-made questionnaire

transformed into Google form and administered online due to travel restrictions during the height of the pandemic. The data included the participants' demographic profiles as age, gender, and year level. Informed prior consent was sought from the respondents to ensure that ethical issues are observed. The data gathered from the questionnaires were tabulated and statistically analyzed using statistical techniques, such as frequency count, mean, and percentage.

## Results and Discussion

Table 1. Age of the Respondents

Age	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
18	2	8
19	3	12
20	8	32
21	4	16
22	8	32
Total	25	100

Table 1 shows that the majority of the respondents were 20 and 22 years of age (8 or 32%. This age range is commonly the age bracket of students who are in college as shown by the data reported by Hanson (2022) that 12.8 million, or 42.1% of Americans whose

ages range from 18 to 24 years old are in school. In the Philippines, the Philippine Statistics Authority reported in January 2013 that about 36.3% of persons aged 17 to 24 years had post-secondary and college education.

Table 2. Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Male	5	20
Female	20	80
Total	25	100

Table 2 shows that out of 25 respondents, 20, or 80% were female and 5, or 20% were male.

This result is in agreement with the result established by Stoet and Geary (2020) who concluded that in most developed countries that are members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), fewer men than women enroll in postsecondary and tertiary education across all subjects stating these factors: schools are less

accommodating for boys than girls, boys poor reading proficiency, the expansion of high-stakes assessments, and curricula that capitalize on the boys' visuospatial and mechanical abilities. However, McNally (2020) has found out that women are severely underrepresented in the fields of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math). This implies that women are inclined to enroll in teacher education courses rather than in STEM programs.

Table 3. Year Level of the Respondents

Year Level	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
1 <sup>st</sup> Year	6	24
2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	6	24
3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	7	28
4 <sup>th</sup> Year	6	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

In Table 3, the respondents are spread evenly among year levels, except for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year. This implies that the respondents from

where data were collected for the study are equally represented, distributed, and collected.

Table 4. Impact of Active Listening on the Language Components of Language Learning and Understanding

Indicators	Mean
<b>A. Phonology</b>	
It improves one’s pronunciation.	4.88
It corrects one’s word pronunciation.	4.92
<b>B. Morphology</b>	
It makes one aware of internal structure of words.	4.52
It allows one to identify relationships between words, including how they sound, how they are spelled, and their morphological structure.	4.64
<b>C. Semantics</b>	
It helps one to be aware of the meaning and interpretation of words, signs, and sentence structure.	4.44
It helps one to classify and examine the changes in the meaning and form of a sentence.	4.68
<b>D. Syntax</b>	
It gives one awareness of arranging phrases and words to form correct sentences.	4.72
It helps one to understand the meaning behind the word order, the structure, as well as the punctuation.	4.48
<b>E. Pragmatics</b>	
It allows one to comprehend the message of a specific language; how it is used in social engagement depends on different situations.	4.68
It enhances one’s skills in conveying and adapting to diverse circumstances.	4.56
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.65</b>

Legend: M=4.01-5.00 (Very High); M=3.01-4.00 (High); M=2.01-3.00 (Average); M=1.01-2.00 (Low); M=0.01-1.00 (Very Low)

Table 4 presents the impact of active listening on the language learning and understanding of the education students in terms of phonology, morphology, semantics, syntax, and pragmatics. Results showed that active listening has a very high impact on phonology, morphology, and pragmatics, with an overall mean of 4.65. In addition, the result showed that active listening had impacted the highest in

phonology, particularly in correcting the respondents’ pronunciation. It had also a very high impact on syntax, especially in the arrangement of words and phrases. Generally, active listening did much impact on the different language components which supported the learners’ language learning and understanding. This result is aligned with the findings established by Mart (2020) which states that the

integration of listening (and speaking) with a focus on listening activities enables learners to be aware of the linguistic features and gives them the avenue to practice the language. As Renukadevi (2014) puts it, listening plays an important role especially in learning a language

for communicative purposes as it helps the learner acquire correct pronunciation, word stress, vocabulary, and syntax. The comprehension of messages can be easily understood based on the tone of voice, pitch, and accent if one listens attentively.

Table 5. Positive and Negative Impact of Active Listening to Language Learning and Understanding

Indicators	Mean
<b>A. Positive Impact</b>	
It allows one to focus on language learning and understanding.	4.88
It creates the best language learning environment.	4.68
It helps one resolve any vague concepts.	4.56
It assists one in obtaining and absorbing language-related concepts.	4.72
It develops one's self-awareness to become a better language learner.	4.88
Overall Mean	4.74
<b>B. Negative Impact</b>	
It prevents one from using other language learning techniques.	2.32
It makes one to be hesitant to ask questions during discussions.	2.40
It limits one's focus.	2.24
It discourages other opportunities in language learning other than the discussed one.	2.88
It is time-consuming.	2.12
Overall Mean	2.39
Grand Mean	3.57

Legend: M=4.01-5.00 (Very High); M=3.01-4.00 (High); M=2.01-3.00 (Average); M=1.01-2.00 (Low); M=0.01-1.00 (Very Low)

In Table 5, the positive and negative impacts of active listening on language learning and understanding are presented. The positive impact of active listening to language learning and understanding was very high (M=4.74) while its negative impact was only on average (M=2.39). Overall, the impact of active listening on language learning and development was still high. On the positive impact, active listening has developed self-awareness and focus on learning the language, while on the negative aspect, it has distracted the attention of the learner to try other aspects of language learning. Borges (2010) concluded that students felt less anxious to speak in the target language after undergoing an extensive listening session. They became more confident and had better listening comprehension and hearing perception after being exposed to a large amount of spoken language and vocabulary. Most of them enjoy learning new words and creating their lists of vocabulary.

## Discussion

This descriptive quantitative study aimed at identifying the impact of active listening to language learning and understanding of 25 purposively chosen education students specializing in the English language at a state university in Western Visayas. Results derived from data have established that the majority of the respondents were between the age of 20 and 22 years old, most of whom are female. Each year level was equally represented; thus, the findings could be conclusive. Further, active listening had a very high impact on language components, more particularly in phonology, as well as in morphology and pragmatics. It has a positive effect on the language learning and development of learners as respondents revealed that active listening allowed them to focus on understanding language and developed their self-awareness as better language learners. These imply that active listening is a vital skill

in language learning and understanding aside from reading, speaking, and writing.

## Conclusion

The results led to the conclusion that active listening is an essential part of language learning and understanding, specifically in phonology, morphology, and semantics. It promotes active participation during class discussions but most often discourages other opportunities for language learning. Thus, language learners should continue paying more attention to the language components – phonology, morphology, and semantics – to enhance language learning skills. Likewise, instructors should develop teaching strategies that encourage learners to be active listeners. For its part, the school should create more opportunities in developing language learning and development where active listening is applied.

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