

# Sustainable Listening: A Driving Force to Enhance Speaking Capabilities Among University Students

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Mohammad Hassaan Khan, <sup>2</sup>Ayesha Rana, <sup>3</sup>Dr. Tasneem Akhter, & <sup>4</sup>Falaq Naz

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## Abstract

The basic purpose of this observatory study is the emphasis on enhancing the speaking capabilities of university students by applying the consistency of sustainable listening. This study is going to encounter the general perception that the students learn the best in their mother language. But in case of South Asian countries, specifically Pakistan, the trend from the earlier education is to study broadly in the medium of English with that of basic subject in mother language. The confusion of converting the understandability from one language to other sometimes contributes in the inability of students to produce desired results. This observatory study spanning two years took under consideration university students from different backgrounds studying in Masters, Bachelors and Associate degree programs where it's obligatory from regulatory bodies to take the exams in the medium of English with exception for applied language subjects. The inability of the students replicating the statements in their heads and to speak thoroughly in English has been observed and a sustained way of proper listening to calibrate the art of speaking has been exonerated. The teacher has been requested to contribute thoroughly in increasing the listening capabilities of students by teaching in the medium of English and the applied resistances from the student's side has been observed. This study played a major part in our understanding of incessant listening experience of students and demonstrate their speaking capabilities just by living under the umbrella of sustainable listening of one language within the classroom environment. The study also presents an importance of our teaching methodology where language plays a greater part in developing the speaking capabilities of students which in turn has an uptick effect in their personality development.

Keywords: Sustainable Listening, Speaking Capabilities, University students, Pakistan

## 1. Introduction and Background:

Language is an important channel of communication through which we share our feelings and thoughts with others (Nishanthi, 2018). In order to apply better linguistic skills within oneself it's always a preferred way to learn in mother language and further there is a direct relationship in

1. Head of Sustainability, Assistant Professor at Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Central Punjab Lahore ; email: [mohammad.hassaan@ucp.edu.pk](mailto:mohammad.hassaan@ucp.edu.pk)
2. Lecturer at Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Central Punjab Lahore; email: [ayesharana@ucp.edu.pk](mailto:ayesharana@ucp.edu.pk)
3. Assistant Professor at Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Central Punjab Lahore; email: [tasneem.akhter@ucp.edu.pk](mailto:tasneem.akhter@ucp.edu.pk)
4. Visiting Faculty at University of Central Punjab Lahore; email: [falaqpu@live.com](mailto:falaqpu@live.com)

between the student's learning capability and the language used by the class instructor (Awopetu, 2016). However, due to different demographics and history of nations, language exertion towards societal development always plays an important part.

By having a deep look in the history of South Asian countries the diversion from mother language towards the language of learning is quite clear where most the population keep on using their mother language for daily activities but source English as a language for educational and official activities. In case of Pakistan, English regards as a language of elite after independence from British Empire back in 1947 (Coleman, 2010). However, in 1973 constitution English supposed to be effectively replaced by Urdu as official language however the inaction remained effective till the 2015 ruling of Supreme Court. But till date little progress has been made and the main reason is the benefits an international language like English could implicate on country's population. In addition, English is the most widely used and most influential language globally, and its importance cannot be denied (Nishanthi, 2018). Further, as there is a global race of taking advantage of online platforms in order to provide services the need of one common language surfaced prominently and English language occupied a massive place in communities. Pakistan's Higher Education platform of ELTR (English Language Teaching Reforms) also prompts on gaining better English language skills and English is the main source of doing the researches, taking the examinations and collaboration papers in between the universities of Pakistan.

In order to let the progression happens on industrial grounds, students need to sharpen their skills and bring a level of productivity within the society. Due to alignment of South Asian countries with that of Anglo colonial past, the process of gaining traction and knowledge by alleviating from English language always seems to be the biggest obstacle. Hence, integrating English as a co-language always seems to be the biggest opportunity to move forward. It's good to see the writing skills of most of the students in Pakistan due to specified requirements of exams to be conducted in English but to demonstrate the better approach we need to let the students overcome on what we call as "language synchronization lapse" where a student from the earlier education starts learning some language other than their mother language. Afterwards, in order to build their understandability and express their emotions firstly they convert the meaning of other foreign language into their mother language, then in next step convert their impressions as due answer within their minds in mother language and finally let that answer in mother language translated on paper in foreign language.

Hence working to bridge the gap to shorten language synchronization lapse is a necessity and intimate a need to strengthen the speaking as well as listening capabilities. Students are also self-acknowledging the fact as shown by the survey of British Council among university students. The students have been asked: "What methods of English language instruction do you find most effective?" The top two results are: 1. Focus on speaking/communication, 2. Focus on listening (English Language in Pakistan's Higher Education 2015).

To build one's learning capabilities whether formal or informal, listening plays an important part. The individuals are as much dependent on their listening capabilities in a sense that 80% of what they know comes from listening (Hunsaker 1990) and this trend increases in students and reaches 83% when we undertook the consideration of students (Ozbay 2005). This trend can clearly depict

one thing which is the importance of listening both in your living place as well as study place. Listening means understanding thoughts expressed in speech, organizing and evaluating them, determining their interrelationships, and selecting ones worth remembering (Ergin & Birol, 2005). In order to let the students play their part in active listening this is therefore important to establish a passionate environment surrounding them where they can be able to show their emotions, produce their mindful capabilities, uplift their examinations grades and enhance their communications in the medium of same language through which they develop their active listening process. The way of delivering is through speaking and the receptor on the other hand absorb those words through their listening strength which shows how important it is for the teachers to deliver the lectures in a way with the help of which students could take maximum of the benefits. By applying the direct instruction method where students just need to listen within having meaningful participation can also produce more harm for them instead of enhancing their capabilities. The operational listening which has been also known as one-way listening is the example of where instructor keep on delivering the lecture and students are just receptors, however on the other hand interactive listening also known as two-way listening is where the dialogues enhance in between class and the instructor. Therefore, to let the students enhance their listening abilities the blend of operational and interactive listening should be more profound in classrooms (Mehmet 2022).

Through the continual prospects of providing the capabilities to the students to enhance their productivity and deriving their personalities not only by delivering better exam written results but by communicative gestures and spoken power, this research comes up with the distinctive possibilities of evaluating university's students endurance towards listening capabilities. This research took nearly two years to complete and the initiation of this research is from the teacher side who communicates the lectures in a pure English language which in fact is the medium of language to give the exams as well (Turkan 2017). The behavior and resistance from the students has been observed thoroughly and with time the feedback and improvement with the classes has been noticed. Further, the interviews have been taken from some of the students of the experimental classes and a strategized evaluation has been done to see the results of student's improvement with those of the interviewees. The enhancement of their spoken and presentational skills has been judged and further translated in reliability figures. Even the university experimental classes have been taken on different levels of students likewise Master's degree, bachelor's degree and Associate degree students. The results undertook during this research gave us a marvelous categorized way of how to give the students a level of fine communication and how to boost their speaking capabilities.

### **1.1 Research Objectives:**

The main objectives to cover within this research are:

1. To assess university students speaking capabilities through Sustained Listening.
2. To derive the resistance within the students to adapt single language listening during lectures (here it is English language)
3. To investigate the problem in system where students are reluctant to speak in same language which has been used for their written examinations.

## **1.2 Research Questions:**

1. Is there any difference in the speaking capabilities of university students through sustainable listening?
2. Is there any resistance from university students to adapt single language (English) listening during lectures?
3. Could there be any problem in the system where students are reluctant to speak in same language which has been used for their written examinations?

## **2. Research Methodologies and Discussions**

The research methodology used for this study has been Qualitative and within Qualitative research the method of Ethnography has been deployed. As this study is focused on university students and it take a broad duration of observation in order to produce some groundwork of conclusion, therefore the time deployed to fulfil the engaged duration for this research is 2 years within which 10 classes has been considered during the given duration of their semester. The observation period starts from the start of October 2020 and concluded till start of October 2022. The students inoculated in this study are from different seniority of university classes as ranging from Associate degree program students, Bachelor degree level students till Masters level students. The main reason behind judging different levels of students is to judge their adapting capabilities and overall conversion of their skills from sustainable listening to speaking. The observation covers nearly 130 Master's degree students, 150 Bachelor's degree students and 35 Associate degree students. This is important to mention here that students don't know that they are being observed and the teaching methodologies has been induced same as that of university's SOPs.

The study initiated from day one of the new semester as the teacher enters in class and after introducing himself define some of the class rules. Within those class rules or in some classes named as class contract, the teacher told the students that from now on all of the lectures will be covered in the medium of English language and additionally the conversations, discussions and presentations will also be followed in the medium of English language (Derakshan 2015). The very observation entailed by teacher in almost all of the classes of different academic levels is the sense of confusion and deprivation within the students. The specific word of "deprivation" has been used here is due to the fact that students started thinking that they get deprived of the ease of understanding the lecture which according to the students could be in their national language "Urdu" or in hybrid which tends to be combination of both Urdu and English. (Shamim 2011).

Here it is important to mention that when students are mentioning the usage of Hybrid language, most of the time they are expecting that if the teacher supposed to read from the power point slides then its fine to speak (or simply read) in English language but then the explanation or elaboration of the slide should be done in Urdu. That's the same "language synchronization lapse" concept we have mentioned above.

The teacher also gave the option to the students, which is in fact just as a judgment stint, by asking them that if they want then he can deliver all of the lectures in Urdu language but then they need to take their exams also in Urdu language upon which the reaction of the students was just numbness. The teacher and even the students knew that whatever the mode of teaching language

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they studied before, but since their childhood they mostly gave papers in English language specifically in Matriculation or Intermediate education except those subjects which are typically language subject areas. (Sarwar 2014)

The next step is the initiation of minute resistance from some of the students giving their opinions of how hard it could be for themselves and their peers to understand the lectures. The deprivation was quite evident in their behavior however overall class reaction doesn't seem to be as such rapturous (Erling 2014). The main resistance from students came in next class where after consultation with each other they come up with a strategy to bring their stance with more clarity. For example, in one of the class of senior Masters Students they at the time of some topic briefing session along with smart presentation asked their lead and one of the most senior member to raise this point. In start, that student started compelling how the present system of Hybrid teaching works in our educational institutes and then raise the point that there could be a better possibility for some teachers studied from foreign countries to speak and understand English better however such teachers should not oblige their students to follow the same procedure. That class also showed their togetherness by applauding the student at the end of his presentation. In another instance, some of the students approached the teacher at the end of the class and told him about their weak background which hinders their listening capabilities.

We were already expecting such kind of resistances from the students and it's a human behavior phenomenon where whenever there is a feeling of a change in status quo there is always resistance. But on the other side the driving force to change the status quo should be more than the resistance itself (as per Lewin's Change management model). However, our main focus is not to bring the ultimate change within the class room or the teaching methodologies, but in order to let the process more precise we thoroughly believed that our driving force should be more than the resistance (Hussain 2018). Therefore, the teacher again explained to the whole class that his way of teaching in a single medium of English language is for their own betterment and this could bring a lot more important characterization in their personalities. After providing an alluring motivation, he again described the class rules and encouraged the students to take a step further to bring something better out of themselves. In fact, most of the students have an understanding ability but they just don't want to take themselves out of their limitations to progress further and this is what we believe is the teacher's responsibility to provide them a platform to explore themselves.

In the start of given semester, our observation was that nearly 40% of Masters students, 35% of Bachelors students and 20% of Associate degree students have enough capabilities to listen and understand the lecture. With time the teacher kept monitoring the situation and there is also a discretion in the mind that if students cannot be able to follow the trend of having an increment in their listening capabilities then we need to terminate this scenario otherwise it could be a full disaster for them. Fortunately, teacher kept on seeing the forward increasing trend in student's listening capabilities and the resistance force also subsides with time. The teacher meanwhile kept on engaging the students with his teaching methodologies and encouraged the students to ask, converse and discuss the topic in the medium of just one language (Gibbs 2004).

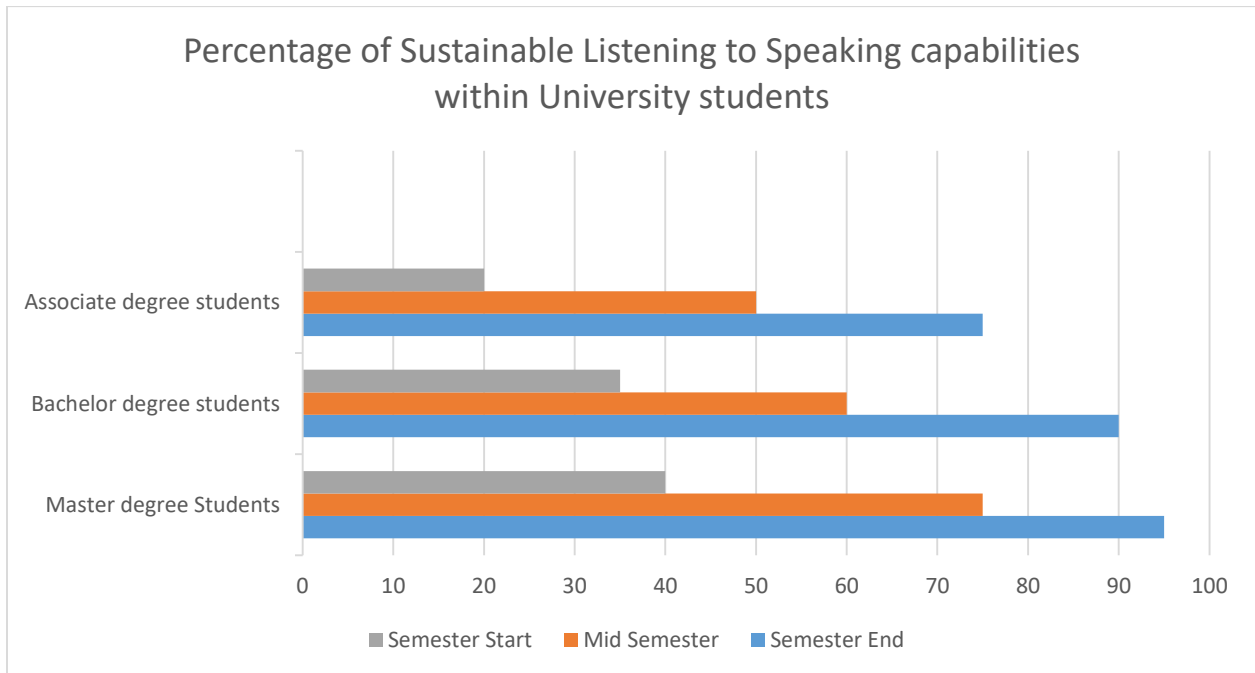
The next step is to wait for the mid-term examinations so the teacher can evaluate the student's progression in the mid-way of semester (Canpolat 2014). This evaluation is not through a written

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examination but it is a gradual evaluation a teacher observes during the time duration from start till mid-term. The evaluation results were astonishing as nearly 75% Masters Students, 60% Bachelors students and 50% Associate degree students are comfortable in listening English throughout the lectures and enjoy depicting this listening capability into their speaking skills. The presentations started getting better and students were asking their teacher for extra time for his tips to engage more and prepare better for presentations (Lynch 2011). Firstly, it was good to see student’s enthusiasm in enhancing their personalities through better speaking and secondly they started seeing some gaps in their presentation capabilities and through better practices and advice they started overcoming that.

Moving forward with the same insight in mind, the classes proceeds towards semester end and teacher kept on observing the class improvement both in listening and converting their listening capabilities into speaking thrust. The evaluation results at semester end were even more encouraging as the amount of students thoroughly understand the medium of English through sustainable listening practices and replicate that listening into their speaking capabilities increases with greater uptick. The teacher’s observation showed an increment to 95% in master’s students, 90% in bachelor’s students and 75% in associate degree students. The trend of increment from semester start till end has been shown in below chart:

**Fig 1: Percentage of Sustainable Listening to Speaking capabilities within University students**



Further to make a greater reliability impact on our research we contacted some students from all classes of different seniority after some duration of completion of their semester and took individual interviews in order to see the relevance with our observation analysis.

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Interviews has been conducted with 9 individuals, 3 each from Masters, Bachelors and Associate degree programs some among those who are still students and some already completed their respective degree programs. The main conversation agenda in interviews is the question about *the individual's experience in the class with regards to listening, communicating and presenting in the medium of English language and whether they think it was useful and how continual listening in English effects their speaking capabilities.*

Below are the results of answers from the individuals:

1. Student 1, Master's student: "This course was very beneficial for me especially your English method and after doing it I gained a lot of confidence in speaking English which helps me throughout the semester. I am where I stand now only because of you, your way of speaking and teaching is really different from other Pakistani teachers. Because other teachers just follow the old and traditional way of teaching and they don't care if the students get something new or not.  
Especially sir! your way of encouraging and guiding me prepared me to do something else in life. It is really because of you that I plan to do a thesis and now I want to continue my studies.  
As you know English is an international language and everyone wants to learn it to compete with others, I think every university should have a course or a teacher who follows new teaching methods and can give something new to the students. Because the traditional method of education is not enough to advance."
2. Student 2, Associate Degree student: "If you remember, being the Class representative in the start of class I told you that students are complaining about your method of teaching and your insistence for all of us to speak in English. Meanwhile students at that time also discussed to go to Business School Dean and asked for some change either in teacher or your methods as it was unique for all of us to have the whole class methodology in English language. After some days I also told you that your teaching method could be good but our level is low then you asked me one thing: What do you think what your level is? And I was just silent then you told me that till now you already gave all of your STEM based papers in English language so this means that you can write English but you are just hesitant in speaking it. Then you told me that you can learn how to speak better when you listen the same language medium better. Afterwards you rejected my requisition saying that you cannot change your method and at that time even I felt quite down.  
But with time I realize that your teaching way is not wrong but different. Other teachers explained us in our local language but you also explained in same English language and with time I also felt a lot more understandability within me. I want to tell you that till the end of semester I could be able to understand you by 90% with ease and I further realize that my communication is also improving by listening which basically helps me a lot in my life further."
3. Student 3, Bachelor's Degree Student: "So! The overall experience was amazing. From the last few semesters no one force the class to speak English but in this class every activity was in English which was very good. We faced difficulties in the start. Even we miss some

sentences while listening to you because your communication was too good. But with the passage of time we became used to it and we all start listening and speaking in English. Listening to you helps me a lot. Now I can even watch movie without subtitles. I wanted to suggest you that don't ever compromise on speaking English in your class because it'll surely help in the future generation."

4. Student 4, Master's Degree student: "Basically, Majority of students in class easily understand your lecture they are like 90%. But further most students were reluctant to talk in English and didn't ask questions due to hesitation like 75% of class Members and among them major ratios belong to fresh students without job experience. The rest of 25% can escalate questions during class because they are doings jobs and professionals and working in fields.

We can say that majority of students were good listeners but not good communicators. In your lecture, listening power had been increased and so our focus, but speaking power still have issue due to outside environment factor as we are not habitual to speak in English. But I want to say that's not the case for professional experience students.

5. Student 5, Associate degree student: "One thing I liked the most is that the teacher teaches only in English. He gives a comfortable environment to the students. Because of his English accent and influential way of talking I also find fluency in my English talking. His way of teaching is different from all other teachers as his way of taking quizzes and presentation on case studies raised confidence in me and now I can speak in English without being uncomfortable. At first its bit difficult for me to speak English in front of the whole class but gradually it built a confidence in me. I didn't find anything negative in his teaching style."
6. Student 6, Bachelor's degree student: "The semester with you was a very great experience. The listening capability of mine was pretty good but still in start, I faced difficulty in communication and presentation. But then with your expertise and support I gain confidence. Till end of the semester I cope-up from so many flaws in my communication and presentation. Listening continuously in English also helped me tremendously in speaking.
7. Student 7, Master's degree student: "It was a great experience to be your student and to be in your class. Normally we always take English language as a burden because that's how it is shown to us but because of your teaching method it became a normal language for us. Presenting every week made me familiar to the fact that how to interact and engage with the audience in a better way. It's a saying that to learn a language, listening to that language is important so we were continuously listening to this language in class for months in your lectures and without even noticing it became a part of our daily routine. I could feel it after the semester and even during the semester that I am becoming more confident and comfortable with the language. Further I must say thank you because even if sometimes students were not that fluent, just like a great teacher you were always patient with us and that's very important."
8. Student 8, Bachelor's degree student: "My experience in the class was just great. Regarding teacher's speaking and communicating capabilities, his pronunciation of words was so

good and I also learned some of them and it helped in my concentrated communication and listening skills.”

9. Student 9, Bachelor’s degree student: “Firstly I want to appreciate the knowledge and teaching efforts in the English medium of our teacher. He has a very solid grip on English, enabling him to clearly communicate with us in class. I can reassure you that in the world of start-ups, having a good hold of communication in the English language has become as important as knowing a skill to get you a job. He had done an amazing job by teaching us the whole semester in English as it has helped us develop a better understanding and speaking of the English language. Furthermore, it has also helped me out throughout my entire internship at LUMS (one of the top business school in Pakistan) as they have a culture of having regular talks in English. I have also worked closely with my cousin who is currently in a start-up, Sadapay, and he used to tell me about how start-ups raise capital, bring investors, etc. and I was able to understand him completely as all the thanks go to my teacher who helped me out in understanding different terms and jargons that can be used in the world of start-ups. Moreover, I have had a large group of friends of over 12 people since the first semester and we were all present in that specific class and didn’t miss a single class the whole semester. I can testify on their behalf that we all agreed that that respective class was the best during the semester and we understood everything that he spoke to us. I would like to thank again for helping us develop our understanding of the world of start-ups in English language since it is very necessary today that we understand English terminologies to the highest level and I believe that frequent communications in English will help us progress a lot in coming future as the English language has become a staple across the world.”

The above interviews are showing the clear relevance of the observatory results provided by the teacher and contribute in making a proper sense of reliability for this study. There is a strong depiction on the importance of Sustainable Listening which in turn helps the students in polishing their speaking skills even without knowing how this capability is going to be accumulated through their subconscious. Through the interviews the initial resistance in students has also been observed and depletion in the inability to speak was also astounding.

### **3. Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study brings the wealth of information and eye opening trends in front of us and it feels as a big relief on dedicating near two years for this vast observatory part which in turn produce its worth. We found out that not only students tend to have more powerful speaking capabilities but also the power of confidence replicate from their speaking power which they produced through Sustainable listening. It’s always difficult to change one’s status quo and here the status quo of the students was to understand the lectures through hybrid language but when it has been imposed on them to listen, speak and coordinate in English their true capabilities came in force. Specifically being the part of South Asian nation, it’s a build in attitude for the students of these countries including Pakistan to have a knowledge of English language which has been used widely to give their examinations in written medium but when it comes to speaking the phenomena of “language synchronization lapse” started becoming the hurdle but by incorporating the Sustainable listening

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methodologies the study helped students improve their speaking capabilities and flourish their confidence.

There are few segments where further studies could be concluded specifically on learning about unconscious behavior of students on language synchronization lapse and the other is the difference in speaking capabilities for those students having employment background and those having no employment experience.

Further through this study we can suggest that universities should prepare their students in accordance to the need of time and never underestimate the capabilities of their students specifically with the help of sustainable listening students can gradually prevail in many other segments of studies as well. Further, in order to develop the national language there is a necessity to change the whole system where the students can write, read, learn and explain in examination in the language of their mother for which government needs to take well defined steps.

We took the final words from the teacher delivering sustainable listening methodology to the students: *“After few months, one of my student came to specifically see me in the university and he revealed me his IELTS results where he pinpointed his extraordinary bands in speaking category while thankfully complimenting that they are the result of taking your class.”*

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