



## RESEARCH PAPER

### Analyzing Social Sciences Students' Listening Skill in EAP Classroom Setting

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Received:</b> October 09, 2020</p> <p><b>Accepted:</b> December 25, 2020</p> <p><b>Online:</b> December 31, 2020</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> English for Academic Purpose (EAP), English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Listening Skills, Needs Analysis, Present Situation Analysis (PSA)</p> <p><b>*Corresponding Author:</b> iram.sial@yahoo.com</p>	<p>In this paper, the researchers are determined to investigate the competency regarding listening skills of the Social Sciences students of Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan and to carry out the needs analysis by measuring the existing level of competence. The study is limited to the three departments: Department of Economics, Department of Mass Communication and Department of Education. Total 150 participants were taken from the said departments: 50 students from each department. A test was carried out in order to collect the data from the students. A recorded program was made listen to the students and relevant MCQs sheet was given to mark the appropriate choice to check the listening competency. Data was analyzed quantitatively by using percentage and chi-square. Findings provide useful insights to the teachers and material designers in order to make understand the sub-skills: skimming, scanning, complex and rhythmical sentences, intonation pattern and vocabulary etc to the students.</p>

#### Introduction

Being an important and independent element of language learning, listening comprehension has been focused in the ESP context about its importance. The status of listening comprehension was shifted from being peripheral and incidental to a status of great importance in the 1970s and listening skills were also given due attention. Gary (1975) mentioned that specifically in the initial phases of language teaching/learning the focus on listening comprehension develops four different types of advantages that are, affective, efficiency, cognitive and utility. In an initial exposure, the cognitive advantage regarding listening skills provides a simple and natural way to the learners to learn the language. Before speaking, listening must be stressed as to decode and process the oral input recognition knowledge is necessary while to generate and encode the speech retrieval knowledge is needed. The second advantage of listening skills is efficiency. In the context where the learners are required just to listen to language and not to speak

instantly, in that language learning is more efficient. The third advantage of listening skills is usefulness and utility of the receptive skill. According to Gilman & Moody (1984) in the context of communication adults consume 40-50% of time in listening skills while 9 % in writing skills, 25- 30% in speaking skills and about 11-16 % in reading skills. The affective advantage from the initial level is the last advantage of listening skills. When the learners are forced to deliver oral production initially they feel embarrassed and discouraged. On the contrary, the learners can focus with relax mind on the listening skills when this pressure does not exist. Neisser (1976)& Goss (1982) identified the listening skills as a mental process in which the listener tries to draw the meaning from the information. Different studies have mentioned the characteristics of the learners that affect the listening skills of the learners like language competence (De Filippis, 1980; Murphy, 1985, 1986; O'Malley, Chamot, & Kupper, 1989), memory (Call, 1985; Greenberg & Roscoe, 1987), and background knowledge (Markham & Latham, 1987; Chiang & Dunkel, 1992). The previous researches have also revealed that for language learning, listening skill is the most important skill as it is frequently used language skill (Morley 2001; Rost 2001), and as compared to the remaining three language skills, the listening skills develop faster which suggest that listening skills can help in the emergence of the remaining language skills (Oxford, 1990). On the other hand, in four language skills: reading, speaking, writing and listening; listening skill is the neglected skill while it is crucial for the learning of a language.

The stakeholders of the Pakistani universities mentioned that the students do not possess the adequate listening competence to cope up with the target situation in the EAP context. Therefore, the main purpose of this research is to investigate in an academic context (EAP) the listening competence of the Social Sciences students at Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan. Regarding this Bahauddin Zakariya University (BZU), a public university located in the province of Punjab, Pakistan is considered. The university is one of the leading universities of Pakistan and caters to the academic needs of more than 20 thousand students. In 2009, Bahauddin Zakariya University made an important change in the policy with reference to the medium of instruction in all the disciplines. In this context, English was adopted as a compulsory medium of instruction for the Masters' level degree programs. Students hailing from diversified academic backgrounds with inadequate linguistic proficiency feel difficulty in their chosen areas of the study because of English medium of instructions. In this regard, the present situation analysis regarding listening skills of social sciences students is carried out. Thus earlier any research related to the students required competence and the existing competence regarding listening skills is not available. The objective of the study is to carry out the target situation analysis (TSA) of students studying social sciences disciplines. Therefore, the present research tries to investigate the existing listening proficiency of the Social Sciences students in an academic context. The purpose of the study is to recommend a needs oriented EAP course for the Social Sciences students by measuring their existing linguistic competence of learners of Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan with reference to the particular requirement in academic settings so that their problem areas could be identified and a needs oriented course be recommended. The recommended course will differ from General English (GE). The General English (GE) cannot bridge the gap between the existing and required academic settings.

This research evolves from the theory of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). To analyze the learners' needs, the researchers will examine the baseline data gathered for this research to answer the following research question:

- What is the Social Sciences students' present level of competence concerning listening skills?

## **Literature Review**

### **English for Academic Purpose (EAP)**

In the field of study and work with the development of English language as the lingua franca, most of the non-English speakers find it important to acquire some level of competence in English language so as to perform well in jobs and courses (Cobb & Horst, 2001, p. 315). In 1974 for the first time the term English for Academic Purposes (EAP) was used (Johns, 1981) and on general level the term appeared in 1975. In 1989 in Britain the old group of British Association of Lectures in English for Academic Purposes (BALEAP) worked for the enhancement of teaching of EAP at university level. In several different contexts, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) takes place. It depends on the academic settings of different countries, it may also use the term English as a Foreign Language (EFL) like in Germany and Finland; or it can be used as a term English as a Second Language (ESL) e.g. as an official or mode of instruction in schools or colleges. Jordan defined EAP as "the communication skills in English language which are required for the studies in educational system" (Jordan,1997, p.1) English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is associated with "the use of English language in the context of study (specifically but not exclusively in higher education) where the main goal of language learning is the ability to cope with the students' chosen academic specialism" (Johnson & Johnson, 1998, p.105). In light of EAP, skills are important to cope up the academic target situations. In this context, Agustina (2014) suggested English Teaching approach for the non-native English language learners.

### **Listening Skills**

Listening is an oral language skill. Nunan (2003) maintained that "Listening is an active, purposeful process of making sense of what we hear" (p.24) Language skills are generally categorized as productive or receptive while writing and speaking are considered as the productive skills. Listening and reading both are termed as a receptive skill. Hence, listening does not mean merely listening to the sounds of any language but it also means comprehend it at the same time. Tarigan (1997) mentioned that there are two kinds of listening situations that are, interactive and non-interactive listening situations. Interactive listening takes place in direct face to face communication and conversation on phone call. In this kind of listening, we ask another person to repeat or to speak slowly in order to comprehend. On the other hand, non-interactive listening includes listening to TV, radio, ceremonial events and preaching situations. In this kind of listening situations, we cannot ask speaker for the explanation or to speak slowly. In this regard, Rahimirad&Moini (2015) highlighted the issues of listening skills and effects of metacognition on understanding of students in EAP classroom settings at university level. On the other hand, Nhue, Van, & Long (2018) suggested the listening strategies to enhance the students participation in different extensive activities of the students.

### **Model in Listening Process**

There are different models for explaining the way by which the process of listening works. Among different models, the known model is bottom-up and top-down model. This approach highlights the use of incoming data as a source of information regarding message. The bottom-up approach commences from analyzing the received messages on the basis of words, organization of sounds and sentences towards the process of receiving the meaning. Flowerdew & Miller mentioned that 'according to this model of communication, the sender encodes a message that passes with the communication channel in the form of a signal and then it is decoded by the receiver' (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005, p. 24) Hence, this kind of approach in listening is seen as a process of the interpretation of message (decoding).

A top-down listening approach is a process that discusses background knowledge in comprehending the purpose of a message. According to Flowerdew & Miller (2005) "top-down models focuses on the use of previous knowledge in the text processing instead of relying on the individual words and sounds" (p.24). This approach helped listeners to comprehend the oral text and message with the help of other knowledge. There background knowledge has different forms like knowledge about the topic of a discourse, setting, contextual or schemata knowledge. In the top-down listening approach, the prior knowledge plays a significant role as the initial knowledge helps the listeners in comprehending. The listeners used this approach, if they have enough knowledge of the language and know the background of the language and also if there are cues in the text that can stimulate the schemata knowledge. In this study, while collecting the data, this approach is taken into account.

### **Materials and Methods**

This study is empirical in nature. In the light of the purpose and objectives of the study, methodology is adopted. In this regard, the information related to the extent of students' listening competence is gathered from the Social Sciences disciplines by executing a test. Three departments of Social Sciences of BZU: Department of Economics, Department of Mass Communication and Department of Education, were taken as a sample to collect the data. Total numbers of participants were one hundred and fifty: 50 from each department. Time given to the participants was 30 minutes. The researchers themselves administered the test and gave briefing to the participants. The data was analyzed quantitatively and presented in the form of tables.

In this study, students' proficiency level regarding listening skills was to be measured. For this, students were made listened to a recorded program, 'Problems after leaving a college and their blue solutions'. And the students were given a MCQs sheet, carrying ten questions, to correct the right choice while listening. Through these questions: a variety of skills were checked: skimming, scanning, to get the gist, complex and required information, vocabulary, understanding accent and terminology etc. This program was recorded from Dawn News TV channel.

## Results and Discussion

This study proclaims the findings with reference to listening skills of the students. The test comprising of a recorded program was analysed quantitatively. This analysis has three sections, Section-1 reports the findings that relate to the Department of Economics. In Section-2, the findings related to the Department of Mass communication have been reported. Section-3 provides information with reference to the Department of Education.

### Section-1

#### The Department of Economics

In this section, the findings related to the Department of Economics have been presented. The test was comprised of ten questions along with MCQs. The following are the findings related to each question.

**Table 1**  
**Showing percentage of responses while listening**

	<b>Right Responses</b>	<b>Wrong Responses</b>
<b>Question No.1</b>	34%	66%
<b>Question No.2</b>	34%	66%
<b>Question No.3</b>	30%	70%
<b>Question No.4</b>	38%	62%
<b>Question No.5</b>	40%	60%
<b>Question No.6</b>	58%	42%
<b>Question No.7</b>	42%	58%
<b>Question No.8</b>	56%	44%
<b>Question No.9</b>	18%	82%
<b>Question No. 10</b>	54%	46%

#### Interpretation

##### Question No.1

Out of the total 50 participants, the responses of 34% (n=17) participants marked accurately while 66% (n=33) participants marked inaccurately in different options. It shows that there was a significant difference between the right and wrong choices of the students.

##### Question No. 2

In the perspective of this question, 34% (n=17) students were able to identify the correct answer whereas the rest of the students 66% (n=33) were discerned with inaccurate options. It reveals that most of the students were competent to answer this question.

**Question No.3**

Regarding this question, 30% (n=15) respondents identified precise answers. While 70% (n=35) participants marked in the wrong options. This shows that most of the students were unable to tick the accurate option.

**Question No.4**

With reference to this question 38% (n=19) respondents marked rightly while remaining 62% (n= 31) respondents had inaccurate answers. It shows the significant difference among the responses of the respondents.

**Question no. 5**

This question was stroke by 40% (n=20) students on the right choice while rest of the 60% (n=30) students marked the wrong choice. It reflects that majority of the students were unable to understand this question.

**Question No.6**

In response to this question, 58% (n=29) students marked the right answers while the remaining 42% (n=21) students ticked wrong answers. Hence, it could be observed that majority of the participants were able to tick the right choice

**Question No.7**

While attempting this question, 42% (n=21) students had accurate answer and rest of the 58% (n=29) students ticked the wrong answers. This indicates that most of the students were not capable to understand it.

**Question No.8**

In relation to this question, 56% (n=28) participants were discerned with appropriate responses, while remaining 44% (n=22) participants put the mark in the wrong option. It reflects that majority of the students were able to tick right choice.

**Question No. 9**

This question was recognized accurately by 18% (n=9) students while 82% (n=41) participants ticked the fallacious answers. It reveals that the students' efficiency regarding listening skills was not up to the mark.

**Question No.10**

As far as this question is concerned, 54% (n=27) participants replied appropriately, while the rest of the participants marked the wrong choices. So, it can be inferred that majority of the students were capable to put the right answer.

## Overall Analysis

The entire responses (question by question) in terms of percentage, of the whole department that 60% responses were incorrect and 40% responses were correct. It means that the difference between responses was observable. Therefore, the difference between correct and incorrect responses was significant i.e. 40% accurate and 60% inaccurate.

## Section-2

### The Department of Mass Communication

The Section-2 also reveals the findings regarding listening skills. The same test was given to the 50 students of Mass Communication. The following table reveals the results of all the questions

**Table 2**  
**Showing responses in percentage of listening skills**

	<b>Right Responses</b>	<b>Wrong Responses</b>
<b>Question No.1</b>	18%	82 %
<b>Question No.2</b>	58%	42%
<b>Question No.3</b>	52%	48%
<b>Question No.4</b>	32%	68%
<b>Question No.5</b>	32%	68%
<b>Question No.6</b>	48%	52%
<b>Question No.7</b>	26%	74%
<b>Question No.8</b>	54%	46%
<b>Question No.9</b>	14%	86%
<b>Question No. 10</b>	56%	44%

## Interpretation

### Question no. 1

The test attempted by the students showed that 18% (n=9) participants responded correctly whereas the remaining 82% (n=41) participants marked inaccurately. It reflects that majority of the students were unable to tick the right answers.

### Question No. 2

This question was supported by 58% (n=29) participants accurately while 42% (n=21) participants marked the incorrect answers. It shows that most of the students were not proficient in order to choose the right answer.

### Question No. 3

By the analysis of this question, it is observed that 52% (n=26) participants put the mark on the right choice, whereas 48% (n=24) participants were discerned with wrong options. It shows that there was not a significant difference between the wrong and right choices.

**Question No. 4**

For this question 32 % (n=16) subjects marked the right choice. The rest of the answers were marked wrongly by 68% subjects. It shows that less number of students discriminated the right choice whereas rest of the students settled in wrong option.

**Question No.5**

In the perspective of this question, 32% (n=16) participants marked the right choice whereas 68% (n=34) ticked wrong choice. So, it could be observed that majority of the participants were unable to tick the right choice.

**Question No.6**

In relation to this question, 48% (n=24) students ticked the right choice whereas 52% (n=26) students marked against the wrong choice. It shows that the students' competence regarding this skill was not up to the mark.

**Question No.7**

In the perspective of this question, 26% (n=13) participants had apt answers whereas the remaining 74% (n=37) subjects had made inapt choices. So, it could be observed that majority of the participants were unable to tick the right choice.

**Question No. 8**

As far as this question is concerned, 54% (n=27) participants identified on the mark while rest of the participants were considered wide of the mark. So, it can be inferred that majority of the students were capable to put the right answer.

**Question No. 9**

Regarding this question, 14 %(n=7) respondents marked accurate responses, while 86% (n=43) responses were incorrect. It reflects that the majority of the students were not able to choose the correct option.

**Question No.10**

In order to discriminate the responses of the students regarding this question 56% (n=28) participants recognized the accurate option. It reveals that more than average participants had the ability to attempt this question rightly, while 44% (n=22) participants marked the fallacious answer; this shows that there is a little difference among the responses of the students.

**Overall Analysis**

The above mentioned analysis manifests that 39% responses were correct and 61% responses were incorrect. It means that responses were below average. However, the



difference between correct and incorrect responses was significant i.e. 39% accurate and 61% inaccurate.

### Section-3

#### The Department of Education

The Section-3 also reveals the findings regarding listening skills. The same test was given to 50 students of Mass Communication to check the students' proficiency. The following table reveals the results of all the questions.

**Table 3**  
**Showing responses in percentage of listening skills**

	<b>Right Responses</b>	<b>Wrong Responses</b>
<b>Question No.1</b>	34%	66%
<b>Question No.2</b>	44%	56%
<b>Question No.3</b>	28%	72%
<b>Question No.4</b>	26%	74%
<b>Question No.5</b>	28%	72%
<b>Question No.6</b>	56%	44%
<b>Question No.7</b>	40%	60%
<b>Question No.8</b>	46%	54%
<b>Question No.9</b>	30%	70%
<b>Question No. 10</b>	24%	76%

#### Interpretation

##### Question No. 1

Out of a total of 50 students, 34% (n=17) participants indicated accurate options. The rest of the answers were marked wrongly by 66% (n=33) participants. It reveals that there is a significant difference between right and wrong responses.

##### Question No. 2

This question marked by 44% (n=22) participants on the right choice while 56% (n=28) participants ticked on the fallacious option. It shows that the students' proficiency regarding reading skills was not up to the mark.

##### Question No. 3

This question was marked appropriately by 28% (n=14) volunteers whereas 72% (n=36) participants marked inaccurately. It shows that majority of the students were unable to choose the correct answers.

**Question No. 4**

This question was answered correctly by 26% (n=13) participants. The rest of the 74% (n=37) participants marked the wrong options while listening. It shows that most of the students were not competent.

**Question No. 5**

With respect to this question, 28% (n=14) students stroke on the right choice whereas 72% (n=36) students marked on the wrong choice. It reflects that the majority of the students were not able to choose the correct option.

**Question No. 6**

In relation to this question, 56% (n=28) volunteers manifested accurate choices whereas the remaining 44% (n=22) volunteers had inaccurate answers. So, it can be inferred that majority of the students were capable to put the right answer.

**Question No.7**

Regarding this question it is calculated that responses of 40% (n=20) volunteers were considered correct, while rest i.e. 60% (n=30) participants identified the inaccurate answers. It shows that most of the students had inadequate competence.

**Question No.8**

The results shown by the participants revealed that 46% (n =23) responses were suitable and 54% (n=27) responses were inapt. It means that there was a great difference between accurate and inaccurate choices.

**Question No. 9**

By analyzing this question it is observed that 30% (n=15) participants marked correctly while the rest i.e. 70% (n=35) students marked inaccurately. It means that most of the students had inadequate competence.

**Question No. 10**

As far as this question is concerned, 24% (n=12) participants put the mark on the right choice whereas the rest i.e. 76% (n=38) participants put the mark on the wrong choice. It reflects that majority of the students were unable to understand this question.

Overall, the above mentioned analysis regarding Education Department shows that 36% responses were correct and 64% responses were incorrect. It means that the difference between responses was observable. However, the difference between correct and incorrect responses was significant i.e. 36% accurate and 64% inaccurate.

## Conclusion

This research revolves around to investigate the extant of academic English listening skills of social sciences students. This research contributed to the scanty portion of research on listening skills that had been carried out specifically in an academic context. It presents inadequacy with reference to listening skills which are shown in the following table:

	<b>Accurate Responses</b>	<b>Inaccurate Responses</b>
<b>Department of Economics</b>	40.4%	59.6%
<b>Department of Mass Communication</b>	39%	61%
<b>Department of Education</b>	35.6%	64.4%

The Department of Economics manifested 40.4% accurate answers and 59.6% participants indicated the fallacious responses. It shows that the students of this department had less than average listening skill, there is an intense need of practice of this skill to eradicate this problem.

The Department of Mass Communication reflected 39% accurate responses and 61% inaccurate responses. It shows inadequate competence of the students of this department. This department requires a syllabus to provide practice in the skill of listening.

The Department of Education indicated 35.6% appropriate responses in relation to listening skill, whereas the remaining students showed deficiency regarding this skill. This shows that their requirement was particularly pressing in order to reduce this deficiency.

In a single whole it could be asserted that two departments i.e. Economics and Mass Communication represented almost similarly, whereas Department of Education bare minimum level. These departments are required of personal efforts of the students, motivation, language laboratory and functional syllabus, so that they won't face any difficulty while adopting any profession.

## Recommendations

The purpose of this research was to analyze the listening proficiency of the Social Sciences students of Bahauddin Zakariya University in an academic (EAP) context and to recommend an academic English language course to cope up the required academic situations. In light of results, it is suggested to craft a syllabus different from General English in order to fulfill the gap between the existing and target situations by taking into account the eclectic approach. Further exploration of listening skills related to background knowledge, socio cultural backgrounds, gender, age and influence of learners' native languages, provide an array of possibilities for future research. In this area, more researches from different perspectives of linguistic and non-linguistic variables focusing on meta-cognitive processes for desired comprehension goals are required to be done. The teacher's role can be enhanced as an expert, advisor, supporter and consultant by incorporating the innovative teaching styles, strategies and methodologies. Any follow up

study pursuing the existing research need to consider the limitations of this research and also to enhance the procedures used for data collection in this research.

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