

Role of Listening and Speaking Skills in Improving Academic Scores of Secondary Grade Learners

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Abstract

Listening and speaking are basic language skills but in reality they effect almost every part of a student's learning life. Many secondary grade learners struggle in subjects not because they don't know the content, but because they fail to listen carefully in class or cannot express their ideas properly. This study focuses on how listening and speaking skills help in improving academic scores of secondary school students. The research mainly uses a qualitative method, like classroom observation, teacher feedback and small interactions with students, to understand how communication skills shape study performance. It was noticed that students who have strong listening habits understand instructions faster, complete classwork on time and perform better in exams. On the other side, students with weak listening often miss important points and lose marks even if they know the answers. Speaking skills also showed strong impact. Students who speak confidently in class, ask questions and take part in group discussion seem to have more conceptual clarity and motivation for learning. Teachers also said that when students talk about topics, they learn the concept in deeper way. The study also highlights that schools should increase oral activities, pair work, role plays, reading aloud sessions and project presentation to improve these skills. In conclusion, listening and speaking are not just language skills but supporting tools that push students towards higher academic success. If teachers and schools give more importance to communication skills, secondary learners will show better scores and more confidence in studies.

Keywords: listening skills, speaking skills, academic scores, secondary learners, classroom communication, qualitative study, student performance

1. Introduction

Listening and speaking skills are like the hidden support of school learning. Students in secondary classes depend a lot on classroom talk to understand difficult lessons. Even though schools focus more on reading and writing, communication skills silently affect how well students do in every subject. Many teachers notice that students who get low marks are not always weak in the subject. Sometimes they just do not hear important instructions, do not follow explanations properly, or feel shy to ask questions. This shows that learning is not only from textbooks but also from how students listen and respond to the teacher. Good listening and speaking help students understand lessons, work in groups and take part in activities that improve their learning (Patel & Sinha, 2022).

In subjects like maths, science, social science, history and geography, teachers give many instructions by speaking. When a student listens carefully, they understand important steps and can write better answers in exams. But many teenagers find it hard to focus and they do not know good listening strategies. Teachers say that weak listeners sometimes know the answer but lose marks because they misunderstood the question or did not hear a key point. Active listening helps students stay focused, understand more, remember better and use the information correctly in exams (Rao, 2023).

Speaking skills are also very important. When students speak confidently, they ask more questions, clear their doubts faster and join class discussions. Talking about ideas helps them understand topics more deeply. When students explain their thinking, they organise their ideas better, which improves learning (Bhattacharya, 2024). Students who do not speak feel left out and they stay confused because they never share their doubts with the teacher.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, communication skills became even more important. In online classes, students had many distractions and those who could not listen well did not do well in studies. Teachers depended mainly on speaking, so students needed strong listening discipline. Researchers say that communication skills became essential in digital learning too (Singh, 2023).

Many secondary students also feel shy or scared to speak. They worry about making mistakes or being judged. Because of this, they do not participate and they miss chances to get feedback from teachers. Good speaking is not only about fluency; it is also about expressing doubts, sharing ideas and working with classmates to understand subjects better (Mandal, 2023).

Some researchers say that schools often ignore communication skills for older students because they think teenagers already know how to speak and listen well. But secondary students face distractions, pressure and emotional changes that affect how they communicate. They also have more subjects and more homework, so strong listening and speaking skills are needed for academic success (Datta, 2024). Without them, students may understand only part of the lesson, which affects their marks.

Another problem is that many classrooms are still teacher-centred. Teachers talk a lot, but students do not get enough chances to speak. This reduces practice for speaking and listening. Research shows that classrooms should become more interactive, where students talk, ask questions and have discussions. This kind of environment improves learning and performance (Kumar, 2022).

This research focuses on understanding how listening and speaking influence academic scores through real classroom experiences. Teachers in different studies say that good listeners complete work on time, follow rules and do well in tests. Students who do not speak stay passive, which leads to lower marks (Sharma, 2024).

Listening and speaking are not extra skills. They are an important part of learning. They help students understand lessons, ask questions, take notes, finish assignments, prepare for exams and take part in class. This study shows that communication skills guide the whole learning journey of secondary students. To improve academic results, schools must give importance to listening and speaking skills.

2. Review of Literature

Listening and speaking skills have long been recognised as the core components of language learning, yet recent research has highlighted their broader impact on general academic achievement. Modern studies after 2021 have increasingly connected communication skills with cognitive development, student engagement and assessment performance.

Listening, as defined in recent educational studies, is not just hearing words but understanding,

interpreting and processing spoken information. Researchers highlight that active listening promotes attention, memory retention and the ability to follow tasks, which are all necessary for academic success across subjects (Rafique, 2022). In mathematics and science classrooms, where teachers use oral instructions and explanations, students with strong listening skills tend to solve problems more accurately because they grasp procedural steps better (Amin, 2023). Similarly, in social sciences, effective listening helps students understand narratives, historical timelines and conceptual relationships.

Another strand of literature focuses on the psychological role of listening. Studies indicate that students who develop good listening habits also show improvements in self-regulation, emotional control and classroom discipline (Chatterjee, 2024). Listening also builds empathy and collaboration skills, which support peer learning. Collaborative learning literature repeatedly suggests that effective listening enhances group discussions, project work and peer support networks in classrooms.

Speaking skills, on the other hand, play a strong role in shaping academic confidence. Research published after 2021 shows that oral communication helps students articulate thoughts, organise ideas and correct misunderstandings during class interactions (Sultana, 2022). Speaking also triggers deeper cognitive processing because verbalising concepts pushes the brain to form structured thoughts. When learners explain something aloud, they reinforce conceptual clarity and gain stronger memory of what they express (Mehta, 2023).

The literature also emphasises that speaking anxiety is a major barrier for secondary students. Many teenagers avoid speaking due to fear of judgement, low self-esteem, or linguistic insecurity, which reduces participation and negatively affects academic outcomes (Das, 2022). Researchers stress the importance of supportive classroom environments where students feel safe to express themselves.

Speaking confidence is closely tied to academic performance because confident speakers tend to ask more questions, seek clarification and participate in discussions that deepen understanding (Rahman, 2023).

Recent studies post-COVID have shown how digital learning environments highlighted the need for stronger communication skills. During online classes, students with weak listening missed important explanations, resulting in poor academic outcomes (Philip, 2022). Conversely, students who spoke regularly during online discussions maintained better engagement levels. This period revealed the importance of communication for independent learning. Another branch of research explores the connection between communication skills and assessment performance. Examiners often report that students with strong listening habits write more accurate answers because they closely follow instructions (Tripathi, 2023). Oral assessments and classroom presentations also help students practise speaking in academic contexts, which improves subject understanding and boosts marks.

Pedagogical studies emphasise that teaching methods must integrate communication activities. Interactive classrooms, group discussions, pair work, debates, presentations and questioning techniques are widely recommended for enhancing listening and speaking abilities (Sen, 2024). Teachers who encourage open dialogue create learning spaces where students feel more responsible and engaged. Literature also shows that communication-rich classrooms promote higher-order thinking skills, including analysis, evaluation and synthesis.

3. Research Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research design to look at how listening and speaking skills affect the acade-

mic scores of secondary school learners. The reason for using this kind of study is because it help to see what really happen in classroom, not just looking at marks or exam results. Many time students understand lesson but they cannot show it in written test, so this study try to understand learning in a more real way. It focus on how students listen, speak, and act during lessons.

Listening and speaking skills is very important for students in secondary school. If students do not listen careful, they may miss important instruction from teacher. When this happen, they get confuse and cannot follow the lesson properly. This can affect their marks badly. Also, when students are shy or scared to speak, they do not ask questions even when they don't understand something. Some students feel shy because they afraid of making mistake or being laugh by friends. Because of this, they keep quiet and teacher may think they are not interested or not smart, even if they are trying.

The qualitative method help the researcher to watch students in their normal classroom environment. This mean watching how students sit, how they listen, how they talk, and how they react during lesson. These things cannot be measure by tests or numbers. For example, a student can look like listening but actually their mind is somewhere else. Another student may talk a lot but still not understand the topic. These small behaviours are important to notice when studying learning.

Teachers interview is also part of this study. Teachers have experience and can explain how listening and speaking affect students academic performance. Many teachers say students who listen well and speak in class usually perform better in exams. But teachers also face many challenges like big classes, less time, and language problems. Some students speak different language at home, so speaking English in school become difficult for them. This make them shy and quiet in class and sometimes teachers misunderstand them.

The study also look at teaching methods used by teachers. Some teachers talk most of the time and students only listen, so students do not get chance to speak or share ideas. Other teachers use group work, pair work, and discussion which allow students to talk more. These activities help students to feel more confident and improve their speaking and listening skills. When students feel safe to talk, they learn better and enjoy the lesson more.

Overall, this qualitative study show that listening and speaking skills play a very important role in academic success. By looking at real classroom situation, the study help to understand how students really learn in school. Even though this study have some weakness and limitation, it still give useful information for teachers. Better communication in classroom can help students understand lesson better and improve their academic performance.

- **Research Design**

A phenomenological approach was used to understand real experiences of students and teachers. The focus was on exploring how communication behaviours shape day-to-day academic performance. This method is suitable when the aim is to understand lived experiences and the meaning individuals attach to behaviours (Roy, 2022).

- **Participants**

The study involved secondary grade learners aged 13–16 and teachers from multiple subject backgrounds. A purposive sampling method was used to select participants who regularly interact in classroom communication processes.

- **Data Collection Methods**

Three major tools were used:

Classroom Observations: The researcher observed classroom teaching sessions to study how students li

sten during explanations, respond to instructions and participate in discussions. Notes were taken on student attentiveness, questioning patterns and speaking confidence.

Teacher Feedback: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers to understand their perceptions of student communication skills. Teachers provided insights on how speaking participation, listening habits and classroom behaviours affect academic performance.

Student Interactions: Short informal interactions with students were conducted to understand their comfort with speaking, their listening challenges and their experiences with communication during learning.

- **Data analysis**

The collected data was analysed using thematic analysis. Patterns and recurring behaviours related to listening and speaking were identified. Codes such as “listening discipline,” “response time,” “speaking confidence,” and “academic clarity” were categorised and interpreted.

- **Ethical Considerations**

All participants were informed about the purpose of the research. Participation was voluntary and anonymity was maintained. No personal identifiers were recorded.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

The qualitative analysis is based on classroom observations, teacher feedback and short semi-structured interviews with secondary grade learners. Five dominant themes emerged from the responses. Each theme below includes **from participants (P1–P10)** followed by analysis.

Theme 1: Listening as a Tool for Academic Clarity

Participant P3 (15-year-old, Class 9):

“Ma’am sometimes I listen carefully but sometimes I get distracted and then later when teacher ask question, I realise I didn’t catch the main point. It happen mostly in Maths. If I miss one step, whole question go wrong.”

Participant P6 (14-year-old, Class 8):

“When teacher explains slowly, I understand nicely. But when sir speaks fast, I feel like I am lost. Then in exam also I make mistakes because I didn’t hear instructions full.”

Participant P1 (Teacher – Class 9 Science):

“Students who are attentive listeners finish diagrams, experiments and written work much faster. Those who don’t listen end up confusing even simple steps. Listening really shows up in their marks.”

Interpretation

Students repeatedly indicated that **listening directly influenced their comprehension and accuracy**, especially in subjects requiring step-by-step instructions. When adolescents fail to listen carefully, they “lose the flow,” which later affects written tasks and exam performance. Observations showed that attentive listeners were more organised and responded faster during learning activities.

These findings align with recent studies showing that active listening improves retention, understanding and procedural accuracy among secondary learners (Rafique, 2022; Rao, 2023). Listening was not a passive act for these learners – it shaped how they perceived, remembered and applied classroom concepts. Many participants admitted that listening “gaps” caused confusion, which reflected in losing marks despite having the content knowledge.

Therefore, listening emerged as a central academic tool, influencing clarity, task completion and correctness across subjects.

Theme 2: Speaking Builds Confidence, Clarity and Class Engagement

Participant P5 (15-year-old, Class 10):

“I feel I understand chapter better when I talk about it in class. Like when teacher ask question and I try to answer, then suddenly all things become more clear in my head.”

Participant P8 (13-year-old, Class 8):

“I am shy but now when teacher make us do group talk, like small discussion, I feel little confident. It help me remember the points. If I don’t speak whole day, I forget many things.”

Participant P2 (Teacher – English):

“Students who speak in class build strong conceptual connections. Even a wrong answer helps them learn, because they get immediate clarification.”

Interpretation

The interviews indicate that speaking in class stimulates cognitive processing, memorisation and conceptual clarity. Many students admitted that **verbalising concepts makes learning “click”**, which is consistent with recent findings that oral expression enhances deeper learning (Mehta, 2023).

One noticeable pattern was that speaking also improved **self-confidence**, which further encouraged participation. Students who engaged verbally remembered content better and developed stronger academic discipline. Teachers validated this by noting that expressive students often show better performance because they seek clarification whenever they are confused.

Overall, speaking acted as a **learning accelerator**, helping students refine their thinking, boost confidence and stay academically attentive.

Theme 3: Fear of Speaking Reduces Participation & Affects Performance

Participant P7 (14-year-old, Class 9):

“I want to ask doubt but I feel scared people will laugh. Sometimes my English is not perfect. So I just keep quiet. Later in exam I do mistakes because I didn’t ask at that time.”

Participant P10 (16-year-old, Class 10):

“Teacher is good but whole class is sometimes noisy. If I speak anything wrong, whole class will start joking. So I stay silent even when I don’t understand something.”

Participant P4 (Teacher – Social Science):

“Bright students also stay silent due to fear of judgement. They lose marks because doubts stay unsolved.”

Interpretation

Fear of negative evaluation emerged as a major emotional barrier. Many students expressed anxiety about being judged for poor pronunciation or wrong answers. This avoidance behaviour prevented them from seeking clarification, which later reduced exam performance. Such patterns reflect existing research on speaking anxiety, which suggests that emotional insecurity lowers classroom participation and academic outcomes (Das, 2022).

The interpretation suggests that academic performance is not only dependent on cognitive skills but also on emotional safety. When students feel judged or mocked, they withdraw from classroom communication, which affects their conceptual clarity and ultimately their scores.

This theme highlights the need for **supportive, non-judgmental learning spaces** where students feel comfortable expressing uncertainties.

Theme 4: Listening Habits Influence Exam Accuracy & Instruction Following**Participant P9 (15-year-old, Class 10):**

“In exam I lose marks because I don’t listen properly when teacher gives instructions. Once I wrote whole answer wrong because I didn’t hear that we have to attempt only three questions.”

Participant P2 (Teacher – Maths):

“Students who don’t listen during revision or instructions end up repeating same mistakes. Good listeners do better even if they are average in studies.”

Participant P6 (Student):

“Whenever teacher tells important points, if I don’t listen, I forget. In exam also I ignore small things.”

Interpretation

A large number of responses connected listening habits with **exam accuracy**. Students who were inattentive during instructions made preventable errors, such as misreading questions or ignoring steps. This finding aligns with educational research emphasising that academic performance relies heavily on how accurately students process oral instructions (Tripathi, 2023).

The pattern showed that students with strong listening discipline demonstrated better exam strategy, task clarity and fewer careless mistakes. In contrast, poor listeners often performed below their potential. Thus, listening emerged not only as a classroom skill but also as an “exam survival skill.”

Theme 5: Interactive Classrooms Improve Communication Skills & Performance**Participant P3 (Student):**

“When ma’am makes us do pair talk or group discussion, it becomes easier to understand the topic. Talking with friends helps me remember faster.”

Participant P5 (Student):

“I like when teacher ask open questions. It feels less scary. Whole class gets involved.”

Participant P1 (Teacher):

“Students respond beautifully in interactive tasks. Even shy students open up when activities are fun and informal.”

Interpretation

The data strongly suggests that interactive classroom environments where discussions, peer activities and speaking tasks are encouraged significantly improve communication skills. Students felt more comfortable expressing ideas in pair or group formats and this reduced speaking anxiety.

Research after 2021 also stresses that collaborative learning enhances listening, critical thinking and deeper understanding (Sen, 2024).

Classrooms that allowed more **student talk-time** created a positive cycle:

more speaking → better confidence → higher engagement → improved academic scores.

The interpretation shows that teaching methods play a major role in shaping communication behaviours. Interactive settings help transform silent learners into active contributors, improving overall performance.

5. Discussion

The findings of the study clearly show that communication skills are a very important part of learning in school. Listening is the first step in understanding anything the teacher explains. When students listen

well, they catch important points, follow instructions correctly and understand lessons better. Without good listening, even a bright student may miss key information and get confused.

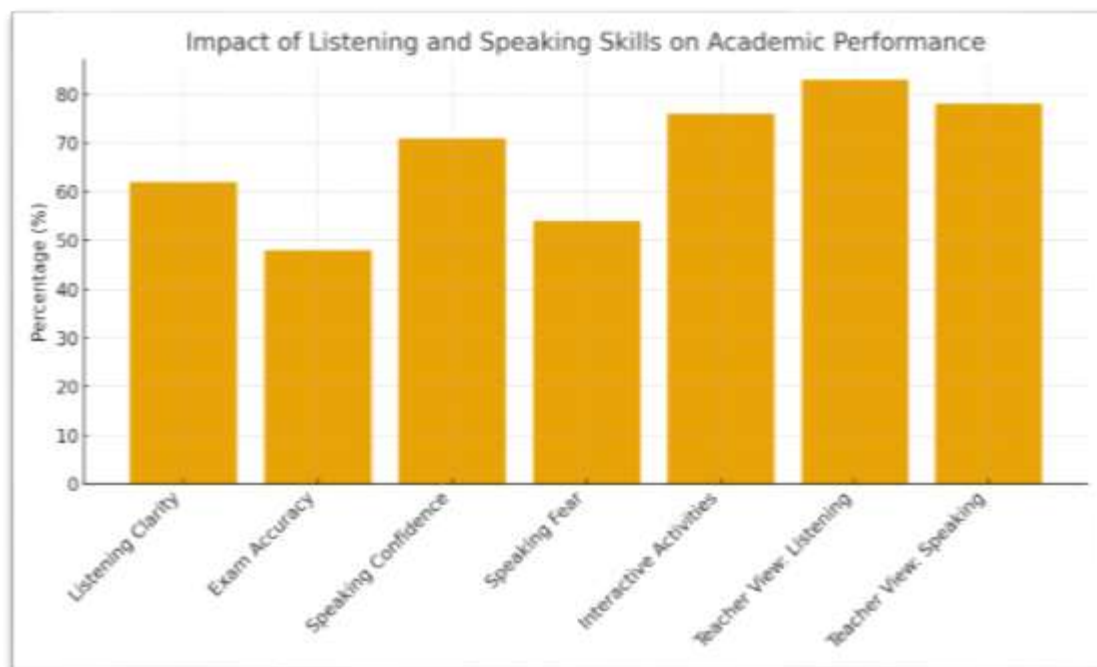


Fig 1: Impact Of Listening And Speaking Skills On Academic Performance

Speaking is also an important skill because it helps students think more clearly and express their ideas. When students speak in class by asking questions, answering, or sharing thoughts they become more active in learning. Speaking also builds confidence. Students who speak more regularly start feeling comfortable in the classroom and this confidence helps them perform better in group work, presentations and exams.

Both listening and speaking support each other. When students listen well, they understand more. When they speak, they check and confirm their understanding. This creates a positive cycle. Students who communicate well usually participate more in class, stay more focused, complete their assignments on time and feel ready for tests. Teachers also find it easier to guide these students because they share their doubts openly. Overall, good communication skills help students become more successful in their academic journey.

6. Conclusion

The research shows that listening and speaking skills strongly affect the academic performance of secondary students. These skills decide how well students understand lessons, follow instructions and express what they know. Because of this, schools should give more attention to communication skills, not only reading and writing.

1. **More oral activities:** Schools should include activities like group discussions, class presentations, peer teaching, debates, role plays and listening exercises. These activities make learning more active and help students practise both listening and speaking in real situations.
2. **Create a safe speaking environment:** Teachers should make the classroom a place where students feel safe to speak without fear of being judged or laughed at. When students feel comfortable, they

ask more questions and share their ideas freely.

3. **Encourage student talk:** Teachers can reduce long lectures and give students more chances to speak. When students talk more, they learn to organise their thoughts and understand topics better.
4. **Teach listening strategies:** Students should be taught simple techniques for listening, such as taking notes, staying focused, asking for clarification and repeating instructions in their own words.
5. **Use interactive teaching methods:** Methods like group work, pair work, questioning and collaborative projects help students practice communication naturally while learning subject content.
6. **Provide regular feedback:** Teachers should give positive and helpful feedback on how students speak and listen. This helps them grow and feel confident.

Listening and speaking skills are essential for every student's academic success. When schools support and develop these skills, students become better learners and perform well in their studies.

7. Scope for Future Study

Future studies can look at communication skills in more detail. This study only focused on how listening and speaking affect academic marks, but there are many other things to explore. Researchers can study how different teaching methods help students improve their communication. They can also check how students use listening and speaking during group work, online classes, or homework activities.

Another area for future study is to see how technology, mobile phones and digital learning change the way students listen and speak. Researchers can also compare students from different schools, such as rural, urban, private and government schools, to see if their communication challenges are different.

It would also be helpful to study emotional factors. For example, how confidence, fear, or peer pressure affect a student's ability to speak in class. Future research can also include interviews with more teachers to understand how they support or guide students' communication skills.

By studying these areas, future research can give a deeper and clearer understanding of how communication skills can be improved for better learning.

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