

Research Paper

Examining the Influence of Listening Skills on the Academic Achievement of Minority Students at the Secondary Education Level in West Bengal

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ABSTRACT

The ability to listen effectively is a fundamental skill that plays a crucial role in academic success. This research examined how listening skills influenced the academic performance of minority students in secondary schools in West Bengal. Listening was identified as a vital aspect of communication and learning, yet its specific impact on academic achievement, particularly among minority groups, had not been thoroughly studied. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study analyzed quantitative data from student performance records alongside qualitative insights from interviews and focus group discussions involving students, teachers, and parents. The results indicated that well-developed listening skills enhanced understanding, participation, and knowledge retention, which positively affected academic outcomes. However, challenges such as language barriers, socio-economic disadvantages, and insufficient teacher training in promoting effective listening were identified. The research highlighted the importance of implementing strategies such as inclusive teaching methods, culturally sensitive approaches, and programs to improve listening skills in classrooms to reduce academic disparities among minority students. This study contributed to the discourse on educational equity by emphasizing the role of listening skills in fostering academic success among minority students in West Bengal and provided practical recommendations for educators and policymakers to address these challenges.

Keywords: *Listening skills, academic achievement, minority students, West Bengal, achievement gap, academic success*

Education plays a crucial role in shaping both individuals and society, and strong listening skills are a key part of effective learning. Listening isn't just about hearing sounds; it's an active process that involves understanding, interpreting, and responding to what's being said. In schools, especially at the secondary level where lessons become more complex, good listening skills are essential for following instructions, engaging in discussions, and grasping difficult concepts. For students at this stage, being able to listen well can make a big difference in how they perform academically. In West Bengal, minority students often face unique hurdles that can impact their studies. These

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include language difficulties, economic challenges, and cultural differences, all of which can disrupt communication in the classroom. Listening skills, in this case, act as a vital link that can help bridge these gaps and lead to better academic results. Yet, despite their importance, listening often takes a backseat to other skills like reading, writing, and speaking in the school system. In a diverse state like West Bengal, where languages and cultures vary widely, understanding how listening skills affect the academic success of minority students is particularly important. Secondary education is a critical time when students are preparing for college or careers. For minority students already dealing with systemic challenges, improving listening skills can be a powerful way to break down barriers and boost their academic outcomes.

This study aims to explore how listening skills influence the academic performance of minority students in secondary schools across West Bengal. It will highlight why listening is such a fundamental skill and how it can improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged groups. The research will also look into the specific challenges these students face in developing listening skills and offer practical strategies to tackle these issues within the framework of secondary education. This paper explores the need for listening skills in education, emphasizing their impact on learning outcomes, student engagement, and overall academic performance. Recognizing and nurturing listening skills in educational settings can enhance students' learning experiences, promote inclusive classrooms, and facilitate academic excellence.

Significance of the study

Strong listening skills are essential for effective communication and learning. Exploring their influence on academic performance can help shed light on ways to address the educational inequalities experienced by minority students, a group frequently overlooked within the education system (Garcia & Guerra, 2004). Findings from the study can help educators design teaching methods that prioritize the development of listening skills. This supports existing research showing that stronger listening abilities improve comprehension and memory, ultimately leading to improved academic performance (Hyslop & Tone, 1988). The study's findings can provide valuable insights for policymakers, emphasizing the need to integrate listening skill development into school curricula. This is especially important for minority students, who frequently encounter linguistic and cultural challenges within the education system (Cummins, 2000). The study highlights the need to address the unique challenges faced by minority students in West Bengal, aiming to create a more inclusive educational environment. This effort aligns with UNESCO's (2017) global goals of promoting equity and inclusion in education. West Bengal's diverse cultural and linguistic environment poses distinct challenges for minority students. This study fills a research gap by focusing on this particular context, offering valuable insights for developing localized educational strategies and improvements (Biswas & Roy, 2016). The study lays the groundwork for further investigation into the link between communication skills and academic success, especially in minority and disadvantaged communities, thereby contributing to the existing body of literature. Focusing on the academic achievement of minority students promotes the principle of educational equity, ensuring that all students, regardless of their background, have an equal opportunity to succeed academically. By exploring the role of listening skills specifically, the research acknowledges the potential impact of this skill on the academic outcomes of minority students. West Bengal, with its diverse cultural and linguistic landscape, provides a unique context for understanding the influence of listening skills on academic achievement. By studying minority students in this

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region, researchers can gain insights into the specific challenges and opportunities faced by these students within their cultural and educational context. On the other hand, listening skills are fundamental to effective communication and learning. Investigating the relationship between listening skills and academic achievement can shed light on how developing and enhancing these skills can positively impact students' learning experiences, particularly for minority students who may face additional barriers. Some of the study revealed that majority of the respondents had the view that reading habits have effect on academic performance and that there is a direct relationship between reading habits and academic performance (Sahil, 2017). Also, Muniady studied the effectiveness of constructive learning theory in teaching and learning listening skills as the existing teaching practice in the listening course is not rewarding. Four main purposes of listening; comprehensive, critical, appreciative and therapeutic listening were investigated in relation to constructive theory. The results show that initially the subjects had low self-confidence, inability to speak and express their ideas or perceive messages and many other barriers but they progressed through the exposure of constructive approach in teaching and learning listening skills (Muniady, 2012). Gebre revealed in his study that to investigate the effects of listening strategy instruction on students' listening achievement and strategy use. The findings revealed that listening strategy instruction was more effective and had a positive impact on students' academic achievement in listening than the conventional approach. Moreover, it was found that the instruction improved the participants' strategy use (Gebre, 2015). Therefore, in this present study the researcher tried find out the Influence of Listening Skills on the Academic Achievement of Minority Students at the Secondary Education Level in West Bengal and the problem stated as **“Examining the Influence of Listening Skills on the Academic Achievement of Minority Students at the Secondary Education Level in West Bengal”**.

Delimitation of the study

This study was conducted in a short period of time, and it was not possible to undertake research on all aspects of the problem. Therefore, the study was delimited by the researcher in the following ground.

1. The study was delimited within the state West Bengal only.
2. The population of the study was the secondary education level students from Hooghly, Kolkata and South 24 PGS. District of West Bengal.
3. The selected colleges and universities were in both rural and urban areas in Hooghly, Kolkata and south 24 PGS. Districts.
4. Only 117 samples were selected for this study.
5. There was only one independent variable – Listening skill. There was one dependent variable- Academic performance.

Objectives of the study

The following objectives identified:

1. To find out the rate of prevalence of listening skill among the students on basis of their gender at secondary education level in West Bengal.
2. To find out the rate of prevalence of listening skill among overall students at secondary education level in West Bengal.
3. To find out the impact of listening skill on academic performance of the learner at secondary education level in West Bengal.

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Hypotheses of the study

Based on objectives of the study, following hypotheses were formulated-

- **OH1:** There is no significant difference in mean score of Academic Performance of the male students at secondary education level on the basis of level of Listening Skill.
- **OH2:** There is no significant difference in mean score of Academic Performance of the female students at secondary education level on the basis of level of Listening Skill.
- **OH3:** There is no significant difference in mean score of Academic Performance of overall students at secondary education level on the basis of level of Listening Skill.

Study design

The present study was conducted based on cross sectional survey research. The survey is an important type of study. It involves a clearly defined problem and definite objectives (Best et al. 2008). The studies are generally conducted to collect detailed descriptions of existing phenomena with the intent of employing data to justify current condition and practices or to make more intelligent plans for improving them. Hence, a survey research design was used because it is felt that is an appropriate technique for collecting information in from of qualitative data about the impact of listening skill on the academic achievement of the learner and practice from a large population involving responds of different background. As the survey study requires a minimum number of subjects to collect information from the target groups, the sampling procedure was conducted. Since a good number of samples represent the population is required to collect information from the target group, secondary education students were chosen randomly on Hooghly, Kolkata and south 24 PGS. Districts. The study was conducted on a total participant of 117 students studding at Bengali medium schools in rural and urban area in Hooghly, Kolkata and south 24 PGS. District.

Tool

The researcher has devised a self-made questionnaire as a tool for data collection. The questionnaire contains seventeen statements; against each one response i.e., Yes or No were to be made. There were six statements, of which if _Yes be the answer then it indicates negative response and rest eleven statements are of reverse order. The researcher has termed the former type questions as _negative questions and the later types as _positive questions. The scores are divided into two categories i.e. High Listening skill and Low Listening skill. Those who scores below 11 are in low Listening skill category and those who scores 11 and above are in high Listening skill category.

Descriptive Statistics

The study was conducted on a total number of 117 students of the age group of 17 to 23 years studying in Secondary education level drawn from Hooghly, Kolkata and South 24 PGS.

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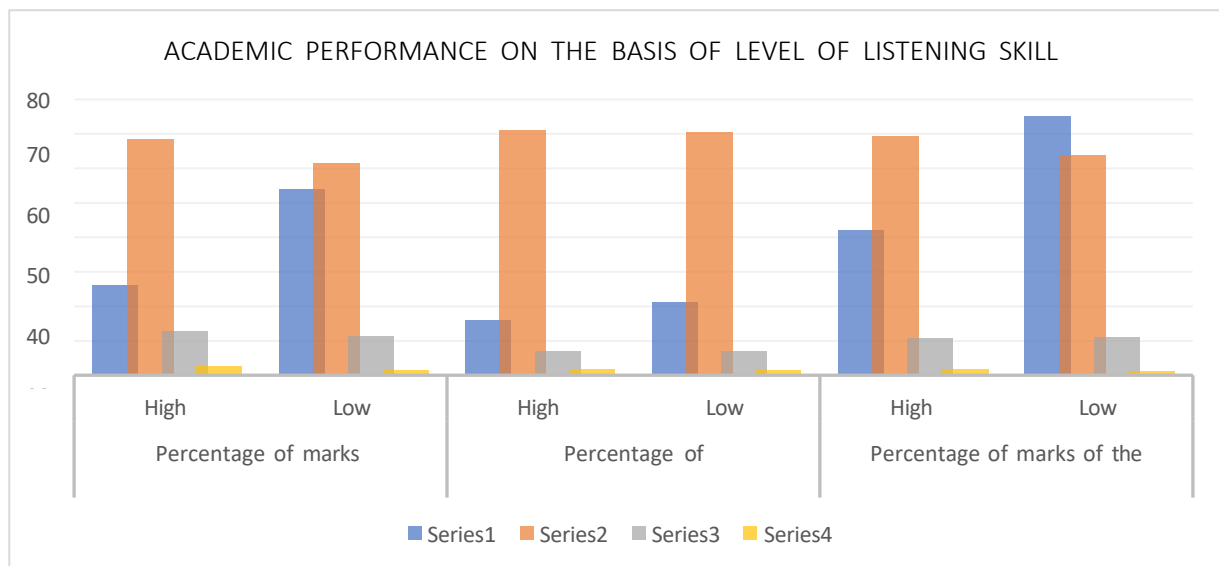
Here first of all the researcher were used to ascertain the mean value, slandered deviation and result revealed that the mean score of Academic Performance on the basis of level of listening skill variable are given below:

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE ON THE BASIS OF LEVEL OF LISTENING SKILL					
	Level of Listening Skill	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Percentage of marks of the male students	High	26	68.54	12.747	2.500
	Low	54	61.43	11.380	1.549
Percentage of Marks of female students	High	16	71.06	6.971	1.743
	Low	21	70.62	7.110	1.551
Percentage of marks of the students	High	42	69.50	10.881	1.679
	Low	75	64.00	11.121	1.284

The average Academic Performance score (68.54) of the male students who have high level of listening skill is higher than the average score of male students (61.43) who have low level of listening skill. These descriptive statistics shows that there is a difference in mean score of Academic performance among the male students on the basis of level of listening skill.

The average Academic Performance score (71.06) of the female students who have high level of listening skill is higher than the average score of female students (70.62) who have low level of listening skill. These descriptive statistics shows that there is no significant difference in mean score of Academic performance among the female students on the basis of level of listening skill.

The average Academic Performance score (69.50) of the students who have high level of listening skill is higher than the average score of students (64.00) who have low level of listening skill. These descriptive statistics shows that there is significant difference in mean score of Academic performance among the students on the basis of level of listening skill.



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Hypotheses testing

Showing hypotheses testing according to framed hypotheses.

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Level of Listening skill	N	Mean	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	Remarks*	Hypothesis Testing (Null/H0) (0.05 level)
Academic Performance of Male Students	Listening Skill	High	26	68.54	78	0.014	*S (P>0.05)	Rejected
		Low	54	61.43				
Academic Performance Female Students	Listening Skill	High	16	71.06	35	0.851	*NS (P>0.05)	Accepted
		Low	21	70.62				
Academic Performance of overall students	Listening Skill	High	42	69.50	115	0.011	*S (P>0.05)	Rejected
		Low	75	64.00				

***S - Significant, *NS - Not Significant**

Findings:

- i) Found a significant difference between the mean of the two groups [$t(78) = 2.518, p=0.014$]. The male students who have high level of Listening Skill was found Higher mean score ($m=68.54, SD=12.747$) than the mean score of male students who have low level of Listening Skill ($m=61.43, SD=11.380$). Therefore, **the null hypothesis is rejected.**
- ii) Found a poor difference between the mean of the two groups [$t(35) = 0.190, p=0.851$]. The female students who have high level of Listening Skill was found slightly higher mean score ($m=71.06, SD=6.971$) than the mean score of female students who have low level of Listening Skill ($m=70.62, SD=7.110$). Therefore, **the null hypothesis is accepted.**
- iii) Found a significant difference between the mean of the two groups [$t(115) = 2.586, p=0.011$]. The students who have high level of Listening Skill was found Higher mean score ($m=69.50, SD=10.881$) than the mean score of the students who have low level of Listening Skill ($m=64.00, SD=11.121$). Therefore, **the null hypothesis is rejected.**

CONCLUSION

The major findings emerged through the present study would be important contribution for our understanding about the rate of prevalence of listening skill among the students studying in secondary education level in West Bengal with respect to demographic variable like gender. Out of 117 students studying in secondary education level, the major findings of the study were highlighted that the rate of prevalence of academic performance among the male students studying at secondary education level on the basis of listening skill:

- The mean of academic performance of male students having high level of listening skill was found to be 68.54.
- The mean of academic performance of male students having low level of listening skill was found to be 61.43.

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Through the findings of the present study the average academic performance among the male students having high level of listening skill was found more than male students having low level of listening skill and statistically the difference was found significant ($P < 0.05$).

The rate of prevalence of academic performance among the female students studying at secondary education level on the basis of listening skill:

- The mean of academic performance of female students having high level of listening skill was found to be 71.06.
- The mean of academic performance of female students having low level of listening skill was found to be 70.62.

Through the findings of the present study the average academic performance among the female students having high level of listening skill was found slightly high than female students having low level of listening skill but statistically the difference was found not significant ($P > 0.05$).

The rate of prevalence of academic performance among overall students studying at secondary education level on the basis of listening skill:

- The mean of academic performance of overall students having high level of listening skill was found to be 69.50.
- The mean of academic performance of overall students having low level of listening skill was found to be 64.00.

Through the findings of the present study the average academic performance among overall students having high level of listening skill was found more than students having low level of listening skill and statistically the difference was found significant ($P < 0.05$).

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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