



## TEACHING METHODS OF IMPROVING LISTENING SKILLS OF INTERMEDIATE LEARNERS.

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8046803>

### Annotation

Every day, people communicate with one another using language. Students must be aware of the various grammatical and semantic structures of language. One of the most demanding skills in language learning is listening. This is because it allows them to identify and interpret language's creative ways. This article demonstrates the difficulties encountered by students when learning the listening skill and it suggests new techniques which can be implemented to improve students' performance in listening skill.

**Keywords:** Listening skill, Listening comprehension, Students, Language, Second or foreign language, Techniques.

### Introduction

Listening involves focusing on sounds and making an attempt to decipher their significance. It is an active procedure that demands the listener to distinguish between sounds, comprehend words and verbal structures, evaluate intonations, and remember the information so as to interpret it in the context or situation. In the past, some people may have mistakenly believed that listening was a passive activity. The hearing standards are undoubtedly challenging for ESL students because of their limited exposure to English. Teachers must precisely plan their listening lessons before class in order to overcome these challenges. In order to successfully teach the listening materials and skills to their ESL listening students, it is their responsibility to properly plan their teaching tactics. This article seeks to present a thorough overview of the numerous challenges that students have while trying to improve listening skills. After that, it makes useful recommendations for how to raise their performance.

### The importance of listening

Many people believe that out of the four language learning abilities, listening is the most complex and toughest. However, compared to other linguistic abilities like reading, writing, and speaking, it has received significantly less attention and training time. Additionally, the majority of studies place more of an emphasis on speaking and writing as effective abilities. (Nunan, 2002; Hedge, 2000). The majority of language classrooms prioritize assessment strategies and listening drills over the instruction of listening skills. According to Richards and Renandya (2002), one anticipated goal of the strategy was to foster the development of listening skills in classrooms while exposing students to second language interactions during lectures. Nunan (2002) believes It is widely acknowledged that listening is a language ability that is becoming more and more important, underscoring the need to learn techniques and methods for comprehending spoken language. The ability to listen is crucial for learning a foreign language because receiving language information is the key to acquiring it, claims Gilakjani (2016: 1670). As kids appear to sit quietly and listen to conversations in class,

listening is very frequently viewed as a passive skill. Rost (2001), on the other hand, asserts that listening is a crucial component of language learning. Language learners are typically introduced to a new language by listening, which is necessary for and enhances the second or foreign language acquisition.

### **Challenges in Second or Foreign Language Listening**

Siegel (2014) asserts that listening is a challenging process to teach and learn. Students frequently feel uncomfortable and confused when exposed to audio materials in a foreign language. Due to the possibility that the input may not be used in practice, this seems to be accurate. (Field 2008). Students can read any part of the text as many times as they like if the meaning is unclear even though they typically only have one chance to read and absorb the content. When trying to derive meaning from aural feedback, second- or foreign-language learners encounter seven problems, according to Hedge (2000: 236-242):

- 1- Not being confident
- 2- Doubts arising from the speech performances
- 3- Difficulty brought on by message gaps
- 4- Complicated approaches
- 5- Uncertainties in the language
- 6- Vague subject matter

The author of "Listening Comprehension Problems Among the Students," M.N. Butt (2010), highlighted a number of spoken language qualities that can make listening challenging. According to Butt, spoken language has the following eight qualities: 1) redundancy, rewording, repetitions, and elaborations, 2) clustering and 3) reduced forms (phonological, morphological, and syntactic), (4) performance variables: pauses, restarts, and hesitations (5) rate of delivery (6), stress, rhyme, and intonation, as well as (7) colloquial language (idioms, slang, and cultural knowledge), (8) interaction: negotiation, clarification, and noticing signals.

According to Gabriela Ulfa Magasari (2021), students have difficulties with listening comprehension. There are numerous challenges that students may encounter when trying to understand what they are listening, some of which are listed below.

a) Cultural distinctions. The cultural nuances of language that have a significant impact on a learner's comprehension should be made clear to them. The pupils may have major comprehending problems if the listening assignment has elements from very different cultural backgrounds. Teachers are responsible for giving students background knowledge about the listening tasks before class.

b) Unfamiliar Vocabulary. It would be quite straightforward for students to identify familiar terms in listening texts. When students understand the meaning of words, it may pique their interest and motivation, as well as improve their listening comprehension. Many words have several meanings, and students will become confused if they are not utilized effectively in their right situations.

c) The accent. Goh (1999) asserts that a speaker's accent is one of the key factors determining listener comprehension. Both native and non-native accents that are unfamiliar can seriously hinder a learner's ability to understand what is being said while an accent is familiar.

d) Unknown words in the speech. It would be simple for students to recognize well-known terms in listening texts. Understanding word meanings can help learners become more

engaged and motivated while also enhancing their listening comprehension. Many words have several meanings, and if they are not used correctly in the appropriate contexts, children will become confused.

e) Speed and Length of Listening. There are certain obstacles to an efficient listening comprehension process, according to Underwood (1989). First, speech pace cannot be controlled by listeners. The largest issue with listening comprehension is that speakers' speech rates and length are outside the control of listeners.

'Issues and Strategies in Improving Listening Comprehension in a Classroom' (Khalid al-Nafisah, 2019) contains new methods for teaching listening. He suggests several instructional strategies for teachers to help students deal with listening texts and enhance their listening comprehension.

- **Pre-listening**

To aid students' top-down processing at this stage, the teacher must present pertinent schematics. Additionally, the teacher has a duty to give the pupils listening discourses that could help them mentally get ready for the text they are about to listen to. To create an environment that promotes listening, there are several other techniques that include *speculating on the topic*, *debating textual issues*, and *brainstorming*. In order to develop their listening skills, teachers must simultaneously encourage their students and direct their attention to a reason for listening. The teacher must provide the pupils with a reason to listen; for instance, speculating on the content of the listening text, in order to focus their attention on the listening process. As a result, the pupils may become more involved in the text.

- **Authentic material**

Teachers must give their pupils the knowledge and skills they need to understand real-life situations in order to achieve the listening goals. Then they must teach the children spoken language and the features of natural speech. Simplifying the task at hand while listening to the original text could be an uplifting and thrilling experience, despite the fact that it might be challenging for novice listeners. However, it is important to let pupils know that it is not necessary for them to comprehend every word. (Field 2002). Hedge (2000) asserts that dialogues with a variety of well-known and unfamiliar situations and role relationships can help the reader understand the content.

- **A diagnostic approach**

Field (1998) and others support the claim that comprehension questions solely assess listening abilities by citing the practice of pre-setting questions and assessing for learners' responses. They make no contribution to skill instruction. Additionally, the process of gathering the responses receives minimal attention in this kind of methodology. However, Siegel (2014) found that comprehension exercises are still quite useful in the majority of listening lessons. Furthermore, Field (1998) suggests that language teachers can discover where comprehension failed to deliver the correct answer by using an analytical approach to listening and examining how the responses were achieved. They can then place more emphasis on those gray areas in their subsequent instructions.

- **Bottom-up activities**

According to the bottom-up model, listeners improve their perception and comprehension by starting to comprehend the auditory discourse's smallest unit, which may be a single sound or phoneme. Following their combination, they create words that eventually become phrases,

clauses, and sentences. By the time they were done, they had effectively combined these sentences to suggest thoughts and concepts. In this way, a meaningful relationship between them develops. This indicates that by adding up phonetic units, arranging them like building blocks, and molding them into terminologies, phrases, and sentences, listeners can construct an inclusive and comprehensive communication message. Nunan (2002: 239), cited by Anderson and Lynch (1988), described this as the listener as tape recorder view because listeners preserve in their minds the received sounds in the same order that they were heard, much like a tape recorder does. In order to imagine what would happen, listeners reconstruct the meaning of what they heard using clues from the text, their stored lexical knowledge, their awareness of the syntactical structures, and linguistic features like stress, pauses, and accents (Hedge 2000).

- **Top-down activities**

Top-down action is a strategy that emphasizes reading the content from beginning to conclusion. It clearly illustrates the main idea of the text. Additionally, it draws on the learner's past knowledge to enhance content understanding. This technique is used in conjunction with listening exercises like role-plays and announcements, sentence completion, differentiating, recognizing appropriate homophones, and difference detection. These exercises can help kids improve their listening, recognizing, understanding, thinking, and analytical abilities. In other words, top-down processing has to do with how listeners make use of their prior knowledge, often known as "schemas." It displays the meaning that was extrapolated from the auditory passages.

**In conclusion**, there is no question that pupils must learn and master the other abilities in addition to listening; hearing training cannot serve as the sole focus of a course. Implementing a range of listening exercises is advised in light of the literary resources that have been reviewed and are being provided. They can help with pronunciation feature recognition, listening comprehension development, or multi-modal processing, among other things. In general, it may be claimed that using different listening tasks to improve listening suppresses some of the unnatural aspects of typical EFL classroom ear training and has a number of positive potential outcomes. Teachers should also be adaptable, aware of their students' requirements, and capable of implementing new teaching methods. Students must learn the abilities necessary to grasp spoken language, as well as how to respond to it, in order to be proficient listeners.

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