



LISTENING IS A CORNERSTONE OF LEARNING ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Abstract. *In the article, you will find the answer to the question: how exactly the students are trained in comprehension of English speech. The tasks that need to be solved by the teacher to make listening the most effective are described. Special attention is paid to the advantages of using audio materials when students are involved in different activities. However, the modern education system is competent in this matter, they pay considerable attention to the process of perception through listening and other effective methods at universities. The audio text is a text for semantic listening. It is one of the leading forms of student learning, as audio texts are extremely realistic based on life events. The article argues the problems of students' understanding of listening. It is proposed the ways of analyzing the listening process to find the most effective points of approach directly to the process. Exactly the methods and their productivity enables the student to master foreign language speech. Passive listening really brings benefits, students get used to the sound of foreign speech and unconsciously learn the pronunciation, but for more success, they need to listen and work on their lacks. Pursuing a specific goal, they can be sure that the exercise will not pass in vain. According to the latest research in the field of listening, different students behave identically while listening to foreign speech. This fact makes it possible to predict their behavior. The teacher only needs to properly organize the listening process. It is written in the work of Shankar, who conducted a number of tests among students of foreign speech.*

Keywords: *listening, process of teaching, element, teaching English language, foreign speech, listening comprehension practice, listening skills, difficulties, classroom activities.*

Acquiring the ability to comprehend a foreign language by ear is an objective that every linguist or anyone aspiring to become one eventually seeks to achieve. At first glance, this goal appears relatively straightforward: one merely needs to listen to foreign speech as frequently as possible by immersing oneself in the so-called language environment. However, how can one maximize the effectiveness of this process and accelerate progress, given that passive listening alone is, in fact, insufficient?

For a long time, educational materials failed to devote adequate attention to such an essential component of high-quality foreign-language acquisition as listening comprehension. In accordance with methodological guidelines, instructors often overlooked the crucial aspect of perceiving foreign speech aurally [4, 187].

The traditionally accepted explanation for this rather indulgent pedagogical attitude toward listening comprehension lies in an earlier, widespread belief that the skills required for understanding spoken language develop automatically through regular use of the foreign language in practice namely:

- through the use of grammatical patterns,



- through work with lexical material,
- through phonetic training [6, 3].

The current position of specialists fundamentally contradicts the earlier belief. The emphasis on listening comprehension is motivated by the aim of achieving an accurate and complete understanding of the speech produced by native speakers. Training auditory perception enables members of modern society to grasp the meaning conveyed by a foreign interlocutor without difficulty, whether in:

1. informal conversation,
2. interaction with a stranger while travelling,
3. negotiations with business partners.

Regular practice in speech perception makes it possible to understand foreign television programs, films, theatrical performances, songs, and other media without communicative barriers [2, 5].

It follows that listening comprehension constitutes a crucial component for attaining an adequate level of foreign-language proficiency. During practice, the learner engages not only the ability to perceive information aurally. This pedagogical process presupposes the comprehensive activation of:

- attention,
- data-processing skills,
- inferential reasoning and prediction.

Additionally, such psychological factors as speech segmentation and the final procedure of synthesis are involved, during which the information is organized and personally interpreted, culminating in the comprehension of the utterance's meaning [3, 7].

Researchers argue that listening-comprehension training must be conducted on a regular basis. Even if an individual leads a very busy life, it is essential to find at least a half-hour window in the daily schedule. Consistency is decisive and helps maintain the skill at a stable level. Another important factor is concentration: it is crucial to devote one's full attention to the training session, regardless of its duration.

Learners should select an audio recording appropriate to their proficiency level, play it, and extract as many familiar words as possible while attempting to understand the overall meaning. It is advisable not to impose limits on the number of times students may listen to the recording, as the key objective is comprehension. During the first listening, the audio should be played without interruption in order to assess the learners' readiness to perceive the content and to determine how much information they can retain. Once they have formed a general understanding of the text, work may proceed with its individual segments.

Each time students encounter an unfamiliar word or phrase, the recording should be paused, and they should repeat it after the speaker. Afterward, it is recommended to locate the transcript and, while playing the audio simultaneously, listen to the recording with the text. It is not necessary to know the meaning of every word at this stage, the priority is to avoid distraction. After reading along with the audio, students should listen once again, and then listen another time while imitating the speaker's facial expressions and articulation as closely as possible, reading from the transcript. This procedure should



be repeated several times, until the difference between the students' speech and that of the speaker becomes minimal.

If students find the text too simple, the task may be made more challenging: after one or two listenings, they should attempt to transcribe the text independently, without resorting to external aids (such as a dictionary or transcript), relying instead on inference to reconstruct the content. Afterwards, they may verify their transcription and listen to the audio again. At this stage, attention should be directed toward more complex aspects intonation and pausing so that not only individual sounds but the overall speech rhythm becomes pleasant and natural. If students struggle to grasp the meaning of the text from the outset, shorthand symbols marks representing particular words or ideas may be used. This technique helps them avoid translating the text word for word and instead encourages more holistic, image-based comprehension.

Researchers note that, for successful learning, it is essential to choose texts that align with the learners' interests. Although thematic relevance is indeed beneficial, selecting audio materials appropriate to one's proficiency level is of far greater importance.

For those working with educational YouTube channels, this is one of several available options. Other resources include:

- podcasts (for instance, from the website learnoutloud.com),
- audiobooks (the LibriVox platform offers numerous free audiobooks recorded by native speakers),
- radio (the BBC iPlayer Radio application provides free access to all UK radio stations),
- films and television series,
- music (with lyrics and translations available at amalgama.lab.com).

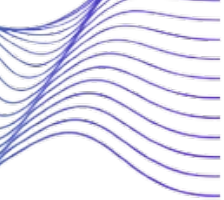
According to instructors, listening skills develop most effectively through video materials (films, television programs, news broadcasts). This is due to the fact that students not only hear the spoken content but also perceive the accompanying visual context.

What difficulties may arise during the development of listening skills, and how can they be addressed?

Quite often, when the text selected for students is too difficult, the words do not merely appear unfamiliar they pass by so quickly that the learners are unable even to form an idea of how these words might be written. This occurs not only due to a limited vocabulary but also because of the thematic specificity of the material. For example, even at an Advanced level, not every learner will understand what Dr. House is talking about or which illnesses he is diagnosing, simply because they are not familiar with medical terminology.

To address this problem, students must broaden either their general background knowledge or their specialized knowledge. If English is studied for professional purposes, learners should read academic articles in their field, consult specialized dictionaries, and, in general, strive to immerse themselves as deeply as possible in the subject area. As a result, it will become easier to process information with each subsequent attempt.

Despite the fact that listening comprehension does not involve overt physical activity (in other words, the learning process appears "passive"), it is active engagement that



ultimately helps students acquire a language and consolidate their skills. Moreover, in real-life situations for instance, in conversation with a native speaker one must not only perceive information but also respond to it in some way.

To make listening practice active, it is necessary to:

1. During the first listening, students should write down key words representing different parts of speech, after the audio recording ends, they should review the collected words and attempt to connect them logically.

2. They should pay attention to key information (as required in most textbook listening tasks). For instance, in a weather forecast this would include temperature data for different regions of the country, whereas in sports news it would be the results of a recent match.

3. If working with a textbook, students must complete the follow-up exercises after listening (such as answering comprehension questions based on meaning and content).

4. They should write a summary of the podcast or video and later check their accuracy (for example, using subtitles or the original audio).

Once they have learned to identify key information, they should begin to focus on context and attempt to infer it logically. If students are watching a series, they may select an unfamiliar scene and close their eyes while listening. As they listen, they should try to visualize what is happening, afterwards, they can watch the same scene with video and check whether their assumptions were correct. The same exercise can be performed without a series: one may simply play an audio recording, pause it, imagine what is likely to happen next, and then verify the prediction.

Although it is undeniable that passive listening offers certain benefits students become accustomed to the sound of foreign speech and subconsciously acquire pronunciation greater success is achieved when listening is purposeful. By pursuing a specific task, learners can be certain that their effort will not be wasted.

According to recent studies in the field of listening comprehension, different students tend to behave in similar ways while listening to foreign speech. This observation makes it possible to predict their listening behaviour. The instructor's task, therefore, is simply to organize the listening process appropriately. This idea is discussed in the work of Schank, who conducted a series of tests among learners of foreign languages [10, 78].

One of the most important factors in teaching is the student's confidence in their own abilities. This confidence must be cultivated from the very beginning of practical training. The instructor should do the following during listening lessons:

- create positive associations with foreign speech,
- demonstrate that understanding a foreign language is possible from the very first lesson,
- provide each student with a sufficient amount of audio material,
- set specific tasks and give clear instructions before the listening activity begins,
- point out the possibility of using a wide range of online resources,
- develop engaging tasks that can interest all students and encourage them to discuss the topic with others.

Translational comprehension remains one of the most significant obstacles for learners of any foreign language. It hinders not only the ability to perceive foreign speech



immediately but also the ability to speak fluently without pausing or mentally translating individual words or structures. Learners must develop the ability to avoid translating each word separately and instead perceive the audio as a whole whenever possible.

Naturally, at the initial stages, students may struggle, but there is no need for discouragement. Full mastery of language patterns without constant reference to the native language is, in itself, a skill that requires training. The only advice that can be offered here is this: if the learning process is maintained without interruption and the time spent translating is gradually reduced, students will initially experience difficulty, yet they will gradually learn to “grit their teeth” and perceive speech holistically, acquiring both the lexical nuances of word usage and grammatical structures. Overcoming this barrier, by the way, constitutes one of the first steps toward fluently understanding speech in films and television series without subtitles.

However, this approach should only be applied after students have learned to identify key information in listening tasks and to comprehend context. If a student recognizes most of the vocabulary in an audio recording, they should not pause to look up unfamiliar phrases immediately this can be done afterwards.

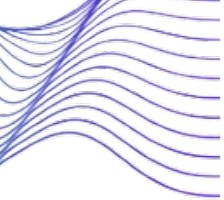
Students familiar with the well-known expression about English, “We write Manchester, we read Liverpool,” understand that words are often pronounced quite differently from how they appear in writing. Therefore, working with the transcript of an audio recording is extremely important: unfamiliar words should be highlighted, and their spelling and pronunciation memorized.

It is essential to emphasize that spoken language abounds with reduced vowels, omitted consonants, and other phonetic transformations. For instance, in English, the phrase “be going to” may become “gonna,” and “have to” may become “hafta,” among others, there is no need to be alarmed by this. Students should simply be prepared for it. This also applies to accents, dialectal variations, and slang.

In the majority of general-language students, only adapted texts are used – particularly at beginner levels because the primary goal is seldom to teach learners real-life communicative skills. Students acquire new vocabulary, become accustomed to the sound of speech and accents, yet they do not experience participation in situations they might encounter in actual life.

When developing listening comprehension, it is important to consider that the topic and even the purpose of the selected audio material may differ from familiar models. To prevent such difficulties, it is necessary to select a video depicting the target situation for example, a lecture or scientific presentation and study it in detail. How does the speaker conduct themselves? What constructions and vocabulary are used? By placing themselves as implicit participants in the situation, students learn new words and structures, which facilitates easier comprehension of any future audio recordings on the same topic and even helps assimilate rules of behaviour [11, 87].

At first glance, one might question the connection between the pronunciation of sounds and their perception. The explanation is straightforward: it has long been proven that individuals perceive more easily the sounds they are capable of producing themselves. Therefore, the better students speak, the better they will hear. Students should always use dictionaries with phonetic transcription and audio pronunciation, pay



due attention to phonetics, and continue observing native speakers, imitating their articulation and facial expressions.

Of course, it is possible to work on multiple aspects simultaneously for example, by playing the audio while following along with the transcript and responding to comprehension questions.

Listening comprehension should be incorporated systematically into every lesson. Moreover, successful understanding of audio material depends on individual perceptual characteristics, such as concentration, memory, and the learner's overall cultural and professional level. Analytical skills, the ability to identify key information, and the capacity to predict subsequent developments in the content are also crucial. It is worth noting that preparatory exercises or activities can significantly aid in subsequent comprehension of audio material. Such exercises include phonetic and lexical tasks that help overcome both linguistic and psychological difficulties for instance, translating unfamiliar vocabulary, practicing reading words with complex pronunciation, and identifying synonyms and antonyms according to the theme of the audio material.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that learning any foreign language, particularly English, is a systematic and multifaceted process. The role of listening comprehension in this process cannot be overstated: during communication, listening is intrinsically linked with speaking (we listen in order to respond), reading (the mode of reading is often determined by what has been heard), and writing (we record the information we hear). Thus, listening constitutes one of the essential and indispensable components of English language learning.

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