

## Learning and Improving Listening Skills in English

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**Abstract:** The article discusses the concept, importance, purpose, difficulties in mastering listening in the learning process, the relationship with other types of speech activity, provides the necessary suggestions and ideas for improving the skills of studying listening and overcoming difficulties in learning listening.

**Keywords:** listening, listening comprehension, strategies, difficulties, suggestions, ideas, importance.

### Introduction

Listening has an important place in learning as it is one of the four major skills in language acquisition. Even though the other skills such as reading, speaking and writing are essential to develop language proficiency, listening contributes primarily for language expertise. Listening awakens awareness of the language as it is a receptive skill that first develops in a human being. Learning to listen to the target language improves language ability: substantial and meaningful response. Especially in learning a language for communicative purpose, listening plays a vital role, as it helps the language learner to acquire pronunciation, word stress, vocabulary, and syntax and the comprehension of messages conveyed can be based solely on tone of voice, pitch and accent; and it is only possible when we listen. Without understanding input appropriately, learning simply cannot get any improvement. In addition, without listening skill, no communication can be achieved [1].

It should not be difficult to realize the importance of listening when we consider that it occupies about 45 per cent of the time adults spend in communication. This is significantly more than speaking, which accounts for 30 per cent, and reading and writing, which make up 16 per cent and nine per cent respectively. Yet, for all its importance, students (and even teachers) often fail to give listening the attention it needs. This is all the more remarkable as learners often say that listening is the most challenging of all the skills in English [2].

Difficulty is caused by many factors ranging from the difference in sound between the student's first language of a second language they are learning, their lack of vocabulary, their lack of grammatical knowledge, understanding a talk, lecture or conversation, talking quickly, background noise, a lack of knowledge of the topic, and an inability to distinguish individual sounds. Many students struggle with listening comprehension assessments because they don't remember the information they may have just listened to. There are many reasons that a student might have difficulty remembering something that they just listened to. They might have trouble because the information is longer than they're used to, or they might have lack of focus.

### Useful Suggestions for Overcoming Students' Listening Comprehension Difficulties.

However, the skill of students will not be improved the best without teachers. Teachers play such a significant in building up their skill. By each lesson, the teachers show his students the ways in each stage of listening comprehension. Generally, there are three stages: pre-listening, while-

listening and post-listening. In short, this research does not focus on how teachers carry out their lesson but it is a chance to understand more about the student's problems. As suggested that here are the micro skills that needed in an enable listener:

- predicting what people are going to talk about
- guessing unknown words or phrases without panicking
- using one's own knowledge of the subject to help one understand
- identify relevant points; rejecting irrelevant information
- retaining relevant points (note-taking, summarizing)
- recognizing discourse markers, e. g, Well, Oh, Another thing is, Now, Finally, etc.
- recognizing cohesive devices e. g such as and which, including link words, pronouns, references, etc.
- understanding different intonation patterns and uses of stress, etc, which give clues to meaning and social setting.

## **UNDERSTANDING INFERRED INFORMATION, E. G, SPEAKER'S ATTITUDE OR INTENTION [4].**

There are some suggestions that are beneficial to students to overcome some of their listening comprehension problems.

- a. Listening activities should be provided based on the students' needs and teachers should provide authentic listening materials for students that help them understand better the natural speech uttered by native speakers.
- b. Teachers should design listening tasks that arouse students' interest and help them learn listening skills and strategies. These tasks not only test the students' listening comprehension but also motivate them to use various types of listening strategies in order to gain the maximum benefits in doing their activities.
- c. Teachers should provide students with different types of input like lectures, radio news, films, TV plays, announcements, everyday conversation, and interviews.
- d. Teachers should familiarize their students with the rules of pronunciation in order to help them hear the different forms of rapid natural speech and ask them to imitate native speakers' pronunciation.
- e. Teachers should help their students to be familiar with the accents of different native speakers. Due to the fact that native speakers have specific accents it is necessary for students to recognize the differences between American and British accents.
- f. Listening activities should be presented according to their level of complexities; that is, listening activities should be provided from the very simple texts to the lower level students and moved to the very complicated authentic materials to the advanced students.
- g. Teachers should provide background knowledge and linguistic knowledge to their students while listening to different listening materials.
- h. Teachers should give their students the necessary feedback on their performance because it can promote their error correction and increase their motivation, and help them to develop their confidence in listening exercises.

- i. Teachers should help their students to develop the necessary skills of listening comprehension like listening for understanding particular information, listening for the main ideas, explanation and inference, listening for intended meaning through providing different tasks and activities at different levels.
- j. Teachers should use body language such as pointing and facial expressions to reinforce oral messages in their students.
- k. Teachers should provide opportunities for developing top-down and bottom-up processing skills because top-down activities motivate students to discuss what they already know about a topic and bottom-up activities give confidence in the understanding of the components of the language such as sounds, words, intonation, and grammatical structures.
- l. Teachers should encourage their students to develop listening strategies. Predicting, asking for clarification, and using non-verbal cues are some examples of these strategies that improve learners' listening comprehension ability.
- m. Teachers should be appropriately trained in speaking skills. Listening is related to good pronunciation; therefore, teachers should have good and acceptable pronunciation which can help learners to become better listeners.
- n. Teachers should ask their learners to always listen to music, documentaries, and news on the radio and television, talk to native speakers face to face or on the Internet so that they can create and reinforce a good habit of listening in themselves [3].

Some more ideas about the solution to improve the listening skill of the students are as following:

Firstly the students should spend much more time on practicing. They should listen to a variety of topics in order to get familiar with them. Hence, the background knowledge will be enriched as well as the skill. In addition, the students should know to apply suitable strategies to each kind of listening text in order to get the best result.

### **BASED ON THE FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY, THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS ARE SUGGESTED:**

1. since listening skill activities are very important in language teaching process, it is necessary to lay stress on the suitable techniques used for this issue.
2. The listening skill should be considered from early stages of education.
3. Students of English major should try to practice their language specially in this skill whenever get chance.
4. A great amount of vocabulary and special expressions should be taken into account by the students.
5. The students should be aware of many grammatical issues used in language communications.
6. The students need to listen to different language varieties used by native speakers in order to be accustomed with the high speed use of the target language [5].

**Conclusion:** Listening comprehension has been ignored in many English language programs. Listening comprehension is a complex process. The strategies of listening comprehension must be used simultaneously. We must understand the text as we listen to it, keep the information in memory, combine it with what follows and adjust our comprehending of what we hear through previous knowledge and next information. Teachers should teach the students suitable listening strategies. There is no an ideal method that fits all types of English classes. Listening activities

should be arranged from basic to more complex as the learners gain in English language. This review of literature indicated the factors that caused some serious problems for learners' listening comprehension and also offered some useful suggestions for teachers and students to improve their listening comprehension ability. It is hoped that the findings of this study contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning in listening comprehension [3].

Listening is important not only in language learning but also in daily communication. However, the students seem to have problems with listening. Many problems, such as the time they spend on studying themselves is too little to improve the skill, the inappropriate strategies of learner, and also the listening material itself. The students should have much more exposure to variety of listening and learn the tips or strategies through each of their learning themselves. There is not an ideal method that fits all types of English classes. Here, the teachers play an important role how to select the suitable listening strategies and how to apply them into the listening task. Listening activities should be arranged from basic to more complex as the learners gain in English language [6].

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