



STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES FOR DEVELOPING LISTENING
COMPREHENSION IN EFL LEARNERS

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Abstract. This article analyzes effective strategies and classroom techniques for developing listening comprehension in learners of English as a foreign language. Listening is treated not as passive reception of sound, but as an active process of prediction, decoding, interpretation, inference and evaluation. The article discusses metacognitive strategy training, pre-listening preparation, while-listening task design, post-listening reflection, bottom-up and top-down processing, extensive listening, authentic materials, note-taking, dictation, shadowing and digital listening resources.

Keywords: EFL learners, listening comprehension, metacognitive strategies, bottom-up processing, top-down processing.

INTRODUCTION

Listening comprehension is one of the most important but also one of the most difficult skills in English as a foreign language learning. Unlike reading, listening occurs in real time: learners cannot always stop, return to the previous sentence or analyze each word slowly. They must recognize sounds, separate words in connected speech, understand intonation, identify key information and interpret meaning within a limited time. For this reason, listening should not be taught merely through repeated testing with audio recordings. It requires systematic instruction that helps learners understand how listening works and how they can control their own comprehension process.



In modern language pedagogy, listening is interpreted as an active cognitive and communicative process. Rost describes listening as a complex skill involving perception, interpretation, response and interaction [1]. Field also argues that classroom listening should move beyond the traditional “listen and answer questions” model and should pay closer attention to the processes that learners use while decoding spoken language [2].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A basic strategy for developing listening comprehension is the combination of top-down and bottom-up processing. Top-down listening means that learners use background knowledge, topic familiarity, context, visual clues and prediction to understand the message. Bottom-up listening means that learners decode sounds, word boundaries, grammar, vocabulary and sentence patterns. In many EFL contexts, teachers focus mainly on global understanding, but learners also need training in recognizing reduced forms, linking, stress patterns and fast speech. Field’s approach is especially useful here because it shows that listening difficulties often arise from specific decoding problems, not only from lack of general comprehension [2]. Therefore, effective listening lessons should include both meaning-based tasks and short activities focused on sound recognition, word segmentation and phrase-level understanding.

Pre-listening activities are important because they prepare learners psychologically and cognitively. Before listening, the teacher can introduce the topic, activate background knowledge, discuss key vocabulary, show pictures, ask prediction questions or provide a short context. However, pre-listening should not explain the entire recording in advance. Its purpose is to make learners ready to listen, not to remove all difficulty. For example, before listening to a conversation at a railway station, learners may predict who is speaking, what problem may occur and which words are likely to appear. Such preparation reduces anxiety and gives students a reason to listen attentively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

While-listening tasks should be carefully graded. If the first task is too detailed, learners may become frustrated and stop following the recording. A better sequence begins with general comprehension, then moves to selective listening and finally to more detailed interpretation. For instance, students may first identify the main topic, then listen for names, numbers or decisions, and later analyze the speaker's attitude or implied meaning. Anderson and Lynch emphasize that listening tasks should help learners process spoken language for real communicative purposes rather than simply prove whether they understood everything [6]. This principle is essential: listening tasks must guide attention, not overload it.

Metacognitive strategy training is one of the most effective approaches to listening development. Vandergrift and Goh argue that learners should be taught to plan, monitor, evaluate and regulate their listening process [3]. Their work presents a learner-oriented approach in which students become aware of what they do before, during and after listening. Routledge describes the book as applying theories of metacognition and language comprehension to provide pedagogical models for developing listening inside and outside the classroom. In practical terms, students can be asked to predict content, check whether their predictions were correct, identify the point where comprehension broke down and reflect on which strategy helped them most. This process turns listening from a hidden mental activity into a teachable skill.

Another useful technique is repeated listening with changing purposes. Listening to the same text several times is not mechanical repetition if each listening has a different goal. The first listening may focus on the general idea, the second on key details, the third on language features, and the final stage on summarizing or responding. Repeated listening allows learners to notice what they missed and gradually build confidence. It is also useful for weaker learners who need more processing time. The teacher should avoid playing the

recording too many times without a clear task, because passive repetition does not necessarily improve comprehension.

Authentic materials are valuable, but they must be used with care. Real podcasts, interviews, announcements, news reports, songs and conversations expose learners to natural pronunciation, hesitation, informal vocabulary and different accents. At the same time, authentic materials may be too fast or lexically dense for lower-level learners.

CONCLUSION

Developing listening comprehension in EFL learners requires a systematic combination of strategies and techniques. Learners need both top-down skills, such as prediction and inference, and bottom-up skills, such as sound recognition and decoding connected speech. Effective instruction includes pre-listening preparation, graded while-listening tasks, post-listening reflection, repeated listening, metacognitive training, authentic materials, extensive listening and focused classroom techniques such as dictation, note-taking, shadowing and information-transfer tasks.

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