



## CHALLENGES IN CADETS' ENGLISH LISTENING UNDERSTANDING

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**ANNOTATION:** *Listening is one of the most common challenges that cadets have when learning English. This article looked at the challenges that cadets had with English listening comprehension in order to find solutions and presented some recommendations.*

**KEY WORDS:** *encounter, constructive orientation, receptive orientation, cadets, insufficient, transformative orientation, self-confidence.*

**АННОТАЦИЯ:** *Аудирование – одна из наиболее распространенных проблем, с которой сталкиваются курсанты при изучении английского языка. В этой статье были рассмотрены проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются курсанты при понимании английского языка на слух, чтобы найти решения, и представлены некоторые рекомендации.*

**КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА:** *встреча, конструктивная ориентация, рецептивная ориентация, курсанты, недостаточность, преобразующая ориентация, уверенность в себе.*

One of the problems that cadets usually encounter in English learning is listening. To determine the solutions, the problems that cadets encountered in English listening comprehension were investigated in this article. The biggest problems that the participants encountered were unfamiliar vocabulary from the content, various accents from the speakers, difficulty when listening for the first time, and exhaustion from their daily training. The instructors may apply the findings of this article to adjust their teaching strategies and find better ways to improve naval cadets' listening skill.



People use ears for receiving languages, identifying sounds, and converting them into meaning in the form of words and sentences. This method is called listening. Listening in any language requires great effort and concentration. Some people using this skill put more effort into it than others. Poor listeners often have difficulty concentrating or putting enough effort into it. Murphy and Hidebrandt (1991) give the meaning of communication as a process that involves sending and receiving both verbal and nonverbal information. It is considered complete when achieving a response from the recipient.

Listening plays a major role in communication. People spend 40-50% of the total time communicating on listening (Mendelsohn, 1994). At the beginning stages, listening is the most difficult for language learning out of the four language skills. Teaching in foreign language classroom displays the significance of listening (Rost, 1991). Nowadays, the teaching of listening has gathered more than it did in the past. Therefore, a listening part is often included in examinations. It is acknowledged as a main part of second-language skills. Listening also reflects the assumption that instructors will not teach the skill if it is not tested. They also complain about background noise that makes them lose focus. The purpose of this article was to explore the cadets' problems in English listening. The results can be used to improve cadets' listening skill and improve their understanding in the listening part.

The researcher is an instructor at the RTNA who has been teaching cadets for two years. He has observed that most of the cadets always have difficulty when they listen to English. They do not often understand messages from both the instructor and their multimedia device. They do not have the confidence to ask their instructor due to fear of embarrassment if they say something incorrect. They point out that they cannot keep up when an instructor speaks or the recording plays too fast, as well as due to many accents, and long conversations. Cadets study English for only two hours a week and cannot spend all their time on the listening part, but a reading part also has to be taught.



Furthermore, their busy daily schedule results in a lack of opportunities to practice listening skill outside the classroom. Another reason that cadets find listening difficult is the daily training causes them to be exhausted and not pay attention in the classroom.

A definition of listening is given by Howatt and Dakin (1974) as the ability to analyze and interpret what speakers are saying. It is related to understanding characteristics of the speaker such as grammar, vocabulary, accent, pronunciation, and meaning. A good listener should be able to perform these things concurrently. Rost (2002) describes the listening process as follows: firstly, the listener receives a spoken message from the speaker (receptive orientation); secondly, the meaning is constructed and revised (constructive orientation); thirdly, the speaker perceives and responds to the meaning (collaborative orientation); lastly, the meaning is created by participation, creativeness, attention, and willingness (transformative orientation). Therefore, listening is a complicated, active process in which receivers interpret from what they hear with the knowledge they have.

For ESL learners, listening is considered to have a major influence on language performance whenever they communicate. Nowadays, listening is assumed as the most required skill out of four language skills (River, 1981).

In second language learning, listening is an essential element for various reasons. Firstly, listening presents understandable information for the learner, which is necessary in the learning process. Secondly, listeners need interaction with speakers to acquire understanding. Lastly, listening practice can help learners to experience new forms of language such as unfamiliar grammar and vocabulary.

Therefore, listening comprehension gives opportunities for improving and achieving other language skills (Morley, 1984). There are obstacles that many people encounter in listening comprehension. These may lead to a poor result, not only in terms of efficiency in listening; but also other skills in communication. Yagang (1993) describes four factors that are the sources of listening problems: the



content, the speaker, the listener, and the physical environment. Other listening obstacles are a lack of interest, embarrassment, and cultural differences.

Underwood (1989) found that listening problems have various causes. Firstly, the delivery speed of speakers cannot be controlled by listeners. Secondly, listeners cannot always ask speakers to repeat a message. In the classroom, the instructor can find it difficult to evaluate the understanding of the students of each part they have listened to, even though they can repeat it. Lastly, listeners do not have sufficient knowledge about vocabulary. Different education and personal backgrounds such as culture and traditions also create an obstacle in listening comprehension.

Problems in listeners may be based on what they have learned in the past. Guo and Wills (2005) point out that language knowledge is the beginning of learning English. It will possibly have a great effect in listening comprehension if the background knowledge of listener is insufficient. Guo and Wills also mention that psychological states have an effect on the listener such as motivation, boredom, shyness, and fatigue.

Disturbances in surroundings such as background noise from a low-quality device or environment can make the listener lose focus on the listening content. Hamilton and Parker (1997) state that it is impossible to eliminate all physical barriers. When encountering these barriers, listeners have to maintain focus. This is essential for effective listening, although it may take our entire focus on the message we are supposed to receive.

Listening problems related to the listener were rated a high level by the respondents. The three main problems were having difficulty listening for the first time, feeling nervous when they cannot keep up with listening, and having difficulty answering after listening. They did not have an opportunity to practice outside the classroom and felt uninterested in listening. Concentrating on finding the main points made them lose focus on other listening parts. The respondents lost their self-confidence when they did not have enough background knowledge of vocabulary



and grammar. Furthermore, they did not ask to listen again due to their embarrassments.

These findings are compatible with Guo and Wills's (2005) study, which showed that insufficient background knowledge of the listener can have a great effect on listening comprehension. They also found that psychological states reduce efficiency in listening such as motivation, boredom, and shyness.

In this part, the participants were asked to provide recommendations regarding how they want to improve their English listening skill. The suggestions are presented as follows:

➤ Forty-three participants suggested that the instructor should provide listening activities such as playing games, watching movies, and listening to music. They mentioned that such activities would make them not lack interest and enjoy the English class more.

➤ Twenty-five participants stated that they needed more practice in English listening outside the classroom but the time in the daily schedule was limited, so they did not have an opportunity to practice the skill.

➤ Since there were non-native speakers in the academy, 17 participants recommended that they need to practice with a native speaker in order to improve their English listening comprehension and learn a standard accent.

➤ - Four participants did not add any suggestions in this part.

The speaker was one of the factors that caused listening problems at a high level. The respondents stated that they encountered difficulty when speakers speak with various accents, speak too fast, stress words incorrectly, have unclear pronunciation, speak with hesitations and pauses, and use reduced forms. In addition, the speaker not using body language and speaking with incorrect grammar were the problems with the same rank.

In this category, the respondents rated the problems related to the listener at a high level. They indicated that they had difficulty understanding when listening for



the first time as the highest rank problem, followed by feeling nervous when they cannot keep up with listening, having difficulty answering after listening, lack of practice and a lack of interest, focusing on the main points, lack of self-confidence, lack of vocabulary knowledge, and lack of grammatical knowledge. Furthermore, the respondents felt embarrassed when asking to listen again.

The problems concerning the physical environment were at a high level. The respondents agreed that exhaustion from the daily training was the biggest cause of their listening problems. Moreover, exterior noises, classroom conditions, poor quality devices, and lack of visual clues also affected their listening comprehension. Most of the respondents felt that learning English in the classroom was boring and uninteresting. They stated that they did not have time to practice listening outside the classroom due to their daily schedule. They suggested that the instructor should provide some interesting activities such as watching movies, listening to music, and playing games in English. They stated that such activities would create a more enjoyable learning atmosphere. Furthermore, the respondents suggested that the academy should employ a native speaker in order to help the cadets practice listening to a standard accent.

This article investigated the problems in English listening comprehension of cadets. The results based on the discussion presented that the first-year cadets encountered listening problems regarding four factors: firstly, the cadets stated that listening problems related to the content mostly came from unfamiliar vocabulary, technical terms, and slang and idiomatic expressions; secondly, listening problems related to the speaker were that the cadets had difficulty when the speakers spoke with various accents. They also could not keep up with if the speaker spoke too fast and stressed words incorrectly; thirdly, the top three problems related to the listener were the cadets had difficulty when listening for the first time. They felt nervous when could not keep up with listening and had difficulty answering after listening; lastly, the main obstacles in listening related to the physical environment that the





cadets encountered were feeling exhausted from a daily training. They also lost their concentration in listening when hearing external noises such as boats and sky-trains.

The cadets' primary suggestion for improving their English listening comprehension was providing some interesting activities concerning English listening such as watching movies, listening to music, and playing games. They also wanted more time to practice listening besides learning in the class. Furthermore, the cadets would like to practice listening with a native speaker.

TO SUM UP, the problems in English listening have four major causes: the content, the speaker, the listener, and the physical environment. Learners encounter barriers to listening comprehension caused by these factors. Consequently, it is important to determine which problems affect the listening of cadets.

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