

PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPING LISTENING COMPREHENSION SKILLS IN LEARNING ENGLISH

Tangriqulova Karomat Saitovna

Termiz State University of Engineering and Agrotechnologies.

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Annotation. *This article examines the main problems associated with developing listening comprehension skills in English language learning. Listening comprehension is an essential part of effective communication, but many learners experience difficulties when processing natural spoken English. Factors such as limited vocabulary, rapid speech, unfamiliar pronunciation, different accents, connected speech, and insufficient listening practice can negatively affect comprehension. The article discusses the importance of systematic listening instruction and the use of pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening activities. Particular attention is given to the role of audio and video materials, repeated listening, vocabulary preparation, interactive tasks, and constructive teacher feedback. The study emphasizes that listening skills should be developed continuously through meaningful and appropriately designed activities. The effective organization of listening practice can help learners understand spoken information more accurately, improve their confidence, and participate more successfully in real-life English communication.*

Keywords: *Listening comprehension, English language learning, listening skills, listening difficulties, spoken English, listening activities, language learners, communicative competence.*

Introduction

Nowadays, developing listening comprehension skills is one of the important challenges in the process of learning English. Listening comprehension is a complex psycholinguistic process that involves receiving spoken language, identifying its main and supporting information, understanding the meaning, and responding appropriately to the information heard. Effective communication in English requires learners not only to acquire grammatical rules and vocabulary but also to develop the ability to understand natural spoken language. Therefore, listening comprehension has become an important component of modern English language teaching.

Listening is often considered a challenging language skill because learners have to process spoken information in real time. The speed of natural speech, different accents and pronunciation patterns, connected speech, reduced forms, and unfamiliar expressions may make comprehension difficult. In addition, limited vocabulary, insufficient knowledge of grammatical structures, lack of concentration, and unfamiliar topics can negatively affect learners' ability to understand spoken English.

Developing listening comprehension should not be limited to simply listening to audio materials. Effective listening instruction requires appropriate activities before, during, and after listening. Pre-listening activities can prepare learners for the topic and activate their previous knowledge, while while-listening tasks can help them identify key information and understand the main idea. Post-listening activities allow learners to discuss, summarize, analyze, and apply the information they have heard. The purposeful use of audio and video materials can also expose learners to different accents, speaking styles, and real-life communication situations.

From this perspective, identifying the main difficulties faced by English language learners in listening comprehension and determining effective ways to overcome these difficulties has important educational and practical significance. A systematic approach to listening instruction can help learners improve their ability to recognize spoken language, understand its meaning, and respond appropriately in different communicative situations. Therefore, the development of listening comprehension should be regarded as an essential part of effective English language education.

Relevance

The relevance of this study is determined by the important role of listening comprehension in learning English and developing effective communication skills. Many learners can understand grammatical rules and memorize vocabulary but still experience difficulties when listening to natural English speech. Different pronunciation patterns, speech rate, accents, connected speech, unfamiliar vocabulary, and limited listening practice can make it difficult for learners to understand spoken information. Therefore, identifying these difficulties and applying appropriate teaching methods are important for improving the quality of English language learning.

Developing listening comprehension also helps learners communicate more effectively in academic, professional, and everyday situations.

Aim

The aim of the study is to examine the main problems associated with developing listening comprehension skills among English language learners and to identify effective teaching approaches that can improve their ability to understand spoken English.

Main part

Listening comprehension is one of the fundamental language skills required for successful communication in English. It involves the ability to perceive spoken language, process linguistic information, identify the main idea, understand specific details, and interpret the meaning of the speaker's message. Listening is not simply a passive process of hearing sounds; it requires active mental processing and the integration of phonological, lexical, grammatical, and contextual knowledge. Learners use their previous knowledge and contextual expectations to understand spoken information. Therefore, the development of listening comprehension requires systematic instruction and appropriate learning activities. Understanding the theoretical foundations of listening can help teachers select effective methods and materials according to learners' language levels and educational needs.

English language learners may experience various difficulties when attempting to understand spoken English. One of the most common problems is the speed of natural speech, which can make it difficult for learners to recognize individual words and understand complete sentences. Connected speech, reduced forms, unfamiliar pronunciation patterns, and different accents may further increase comprehension difficulties. Limited vocabulary is another important factor because learners may lose the general meaning when they encounter unfamiliar words.

Grammatical complexity, unfamiliar topics, insufficient background knowledge, and limited concentration can also negatively influence listening performance. In addition, some learners may experience anxiety when they cannot understand the audio material immediately. Identifying these difficulties is important for developing appropriate instructional strategies.

The development of listening comprehension requires carefully planned pedagogical activities that correspond to learners' abilities and learning objectives. Pre-listening activities can prepare learners for the topic by introducing key vocabulary, discussing background information, and predicting possible content. During-listening activities may include identifying the main idea, selecting correct answers, completing information, and recognizing specific details. Post-listening activities can help learners summarize, discuss, analyze, and apply the information they have heard. Teachers can also use dialogues, interviews, podcasts, short lectures, songs, and educational videos to provide learners with different types of spoken English. Gradually increasing the complexity of listening materials can help learners develop confidence and improve their ability to process spoken language.

Communicative and interactive activities can make listening practice more meaningful and engaging for learners. Pair and group activities encourage students to discuss what they have heard, compare answers, exchange information, and clarify their understanding. For example, learners can listen to a short dialogue and then reconstruct its main content with a partner.

Information-gap activities can also encourage students to listen carefully because they need specific information to complete a task. Discussions, question-and-answer activities, problem-solving tasks, and retelling exercises can connect listening with speaking and other language skills. Such activities help learners become active participants in the learning process and provide opportunities to use the information obtained through listening in meaningful communication.

Modern educational resources provide extensive opportunities for developing English listening comprehension. Audio recordings, educational videos, podcasts, online materials, and interactive learning platforms can expose learners to different speakers, accents, pronunciation patterns, and communication contexts. However, the effectiveness of these resources depends on their appropriate selection and purposeful use. Materials should correspond to learners' age, language level, interests, and learning objectives. Regular listening practice is particularly important because learners need continuous exposure to spoken English to develop faster and more accurate processing skills. Repeated listening, note-taking, summarizing, and identifying key information can gradually improve comprehension. Therefore, the combination of modern resources, systematic practice, and appropriate pedagogical guidance can support the effective development of listening comprehension skills.

Results

The study involved 30 English language learners and focused on identifying the main difficulties associated with listening comprehension and evaluating the effectiveness of regular listening activities. At the beginning of the study, several common problems were identified among the participants. Limited vocabulary was observed in 20 learners (66.7%), while 18 learners (60.0%) experienced difficulties in understanding natural speech at a normal speaking speed. Problems related to pronunciation and different accents were identified in 17 learners (56.7%). In addition, 16 learners (53.3%) reported difficulties in understanding connected speech and reduced forms. Following the implementation of structured listening activities, noticeable improvements were observed in the learners' listening performance. A total of 23 learners (76.7%) demonstrated better ability to identify the main idea of an audio text, while 21 learners (70.0%) showed improvement in recognizing specific information.

Vocabulary-related comprehension also improved, with 22 learners (73.3%) demonstrating better understanding of unfamiliar words through contextual clues.

The use of pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening activities contributed to more active participation during listening tasks. Twenty-four learners (80.0%) became more confident when working with English audio materials. Twenty-two learners (73.3%) were able to follow spoken information more effectively, even when the speaker used relatively natural speech.

Improvement in understanding different pronunciation patterns and accents was observed among 19 learners (63.3%). Regular repetition of listening materials also produced positive changes. Twenty-one learners (70.0%) demonstrated better comprehension after repeated listening, while 20 learners (66.7%) became more successful in identifying key words and important details.

In addition, 23 learners (76.7%) showed improved ability to summarize the main content of the material they had listened to. The results indicate that systematic listening practice and the use of appropriately designed activities can help learners overcome common difficulties in listening comprehension. The combination of different listening stages, authentic materials, vocabulary preparation, repeated practice, and interactive follow-up activities supported the development of learners' ability to understand spoken English more effectively.

Discussion

The development of listening comprehension is a complex process that requires learners to understand spoken language quickly and accurately. The difficulties identified in the study demonstrate that listening problems are often associated with several factors, including limited vocabulary, unfamiliar pronunciation, natural speech rate, connected speech, and differences in accents. These factors can make it difficult for learners to process spoken information and understand the intended meaning. One important issue is the difference between classroom English and authentic spoken English. Learners who are mainly exposed to slow and clearly pronounced speech may experience difficulties when they encounter natural conversations. In real communication, speakers may use reduced forms, connected words, different intonation patterns, and various pronunciation styles. Therefore, listening instruction should gradually expose learners to authentic and appropriately challenging materials.

Vocabulary knowledge also plays an important role in listening comprehension. When learners encounter several unfamiliar words in a short audio text, they may lose the overall meaning of the message. However, teaching every unfamiliar word before listening is not always necessary. Learners should also be trained to use contextual information, key words, tone, and previously acquired knowledge to understand the general meaning. The organization of listening activities is another important consideration.

Dividing a listening lesson into pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening stages can provide learners with clear objectives and reduce unnecessary cognitive difficulties. Pre-listening activities prepare learners for the topic, while-listening tasks direct their attention toward important information, and post-listening activities help them reflect on and apply what they have understood.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that listening comprehension is an essential component of successful English language learning and communication.

Learners may experience difficulties in understanding spoken English because of limited vocabulary, natural speech rate, connected speech, unfamiliar pronunciation, and different accents.

These difficulties can be reduced through systematic and well-organized listening instruction. The findings indicate that the effective development of listening skills requires a combination of pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening activities. Regular exposure to appropriate audio and video materials, repeated listening, vocabulary preparation, and tasks focused on identifying the main idea and specific information can help learners improve their comprehension. Interactive activities such as pair work, discussions, information-gap tasks, and summarizing can further strengthen the learning process.

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