



Listening comprehension skills in second language learners (L2): Problems and Solutions

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2889

Abstract:

In order to learn English, it's crucial to develop your listening skills. Many listening challenges arise for students when they listen to the English language. Universities and schools place a greater emphasis on writing, reading, and vocabulary, which causes students to have serious problems with listening comprehension. Most textbooks for courses do not place much emphasis on listening, and most instructors do not emphasize this crucial skill in their lessons. The author of this paper analyses the concepts of listening, listening comprehension, listening strategies, listening difficulties, and ways to improve listening comprehension.

Keywords: listening, listening comprehension, issues, difficulties, strategies

DOI Number: 10.14704/nq.2022.20.10.NQ55259

NeuroQuantology 2022; 20(10): 2889-2893

- 1. Introduction:** The ability to listen involves being able to recognize and comprehend what others are saying. This entails comprehending the speaker's meaning as well as their accent, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. The most common language skill is listening. It is the method by which we process language in real time and the only way we can pause and encode spoken language. Understanding what is heard and categorizing it into lexical elements are processes that occur during listening. Additionally, listening involves taking in what is being said, giving it meaning, demonstrating that meaning to the listener, negotiating that meaning with the speaker and responding, and creating meaning through participation, creativity, and empathy. According to Hamouda (2013), having a good ear for listening is crucial for understanding input. If there is no input, learning cannot happen.
- 2. Definition of Listening:** Listening is the first aptitude and talent that new language learners need to develop. Given that it is a receptive skill, beginning language learners pick up new words as a result of what they have heard or listened to. The capacity for receiving has an impact on the capacity for production. A person with good listening abilities will comprehend what is being said, and they may even be capable of speaking and writing. The following definitions were provided by linguists. In accordance with Brown, listening occurs when a



student responds orally or in writing, indicating whether their auditory processing was accurate or inaccurate. The students must actively think while listening in order to develop their listening skills. Many language-learning activities, both inside and outside of the language classroom, involve listening. The development of other language skills will be supported by the improvement in listening. Listening, according to Chastain (1971), is the capacity to comprehend normally-paced native speech.

3. Definition of Listening

Comprehension: Understanding spoken language involves several different processes, including listening comprehension. These include being aware of speech sounds, understanding the significance of individual words, and comprehending sentence structure. The terms "listening comprehension," "spoken language understanding," "speech recognition," and "speech perception" are all products of instructional methodology. According to some researchers, Listeners contribute to the process of meaning creation during listening comprehension. Purdy (1997) defined listening as the act of receiving, interpreting, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages. According to Rost (2002), listening is a difficult interpretive process in which listeners compare what they hear to what they already know and listening is one of the essential components of successful communication because it aids in our understanding of the environment.

4. Listening Comprehension Strategies:

A) Students use meta-cognitive strategies to understand their learning process, which consists of three phases: planning, monitoring, and evaluating. There are 15 statements related to the application of metacognitive strategies in listening activities, based on the questionnaire that Cross (2009) adopted:

1. I have a strategy in

2. When I'm having trouble understanding the text, I concentrate more.
3. Whenever my thoughts stray, I quickly regain focus.
4. I go out of my way to try to make up for things I don't understand.
5. I consider previous texts I may have heard before listening.
6. When I lose focus, I make an effort to get back on track.
7. I pinpoint my listening issues and try to fix them.
8. After listening, I reflect on my listening style and consider what I could do differently the next time.
9. I give up trying to understand what I hear and stop listening when it becomes difficult.
10. To avoid missing the next sentence, I skip over words I don't understand.
11. I check in with myself from time to time to see if I am satisfied with my level of understanding as I listen.
12. After finishing the listening, I discuss it with my classmates.
13. Prior to listening, I focus my attention on the task at hand and keep distracting thoughts to a minimum.
14. Pay attention to what is said, but don't focus too much on each new word.
15. I mentally repeat key phrases as I listen.

B) Cognitive strategies require the students' thought processes, which can help them become flexible and strategic learners. Making a note of the strategies will help you remember the details. Bottom-up and top-down cognitive strategies are the two main categories of listening. Word-for-word translation, controlling speech rate, repeating the spoken text, and focusing on prosodic aspects of the text are examples of bottom-up strategies. Forecasting, speculating, explaining, and visualising are all aspects of top-down strategies. Compared to beginners, advanced students employ more top-down strategies.

C) Socio/Affective Strategies:

Socio-affective techniques include engaging in conversation with others or taking charge of one's emotions. In other words, it requires the



ability of the learners to restrain their emotions. According to Vandergrift (2003) and Abdalhamid (2012), listeners use socio-affective strategies as tools to cooperate with others, assess their understanding, and lessen anxiety. Affective strategies are very important, according to Gardner and MacIntyre (1993), because the learning environment and learners' social-psychological factors are intertwined.

5. **The Importance of Listening Comprehension in English Learning:**

More focus is needed for listening comprehension, and quick understanding is also necessary. There are many things that should be specifically considered while listening. The listeners' ability to comprehend what is being said by speakers is greatly aided by the context, facial expressions, and body language of the speakers. (Ziane, 2011). Listening comprehension is crucial because it is a process by which we receive input, and without it, learning cannot take place, according to Rost (1994) and Ziane (2011). According to Doff (1995) and Ziane (2011), speaking development is significantly influenced by listening. That is, unless we improve our listening skills, we cannot improve our speaking abilities. An English language learner would find it very simple to study, watch movies, listen to the radio, and communicate with foreigners if he had good listening skills. To develop this skill, learners should have a lot of practise and exposure to English. Learning a language and listening to it have a connection. If we contrast two language learners, one lives in a nation where the target language is widely spoken, and the other lives in a nation where English is only used in academic settings. The first learner can pick up English more quickly, efficiently, and easily than the second one. As a result, students need as much exposure to the English language as they can get.

6. **Reasons Why Listening Comprehension is**

Difficult: For students and those taking the TOEFL, listening can often be a frightening experience. When it comes to the listening portion of the exam, the majority of participants are anxious. It needs to be perceptive and cognizant of what is being said. Many people find listening tests confusing because they can't recall the dialogue and they don't know what to do or how to listen in English effectively. The respondents' requirement that they listen while simultaneously writing their response is another factor in why they struggle with English listening. (Rintaningrum, 2018). As for other reasons, why listening in English is difficult:

1. **Less knowledge of the English accent:** There are two accents in English: an American accent and a British accent.
2. **Lack of focus when listening:** It is necessary to pay enough attention when listening. Need to focus more by paying closer attention to what the native speakers are saying.
3. **Vocabulary and pronunciation errors:** Listening will be more challenging to comprehend if the vocabulary is lacking and you don't know how to pronounce the words. It's not enough to understand vocabulary when listening; you also need to be able to pronounce what native speakers are saying.
4. **Interpret words:** English and Indonesian are distinct languages. In Indonesian, a single word can have multiple meanings, whereas in English, a word can take on a different meaning when used in conjunction with other words. Therefore, it's important to pay close attention when understanding phrases and sentences and to avoid understanding speech in words.



5. *Can't distinguish words and sounds:* You will hear sounds that are similar but have different meanings as you listen. In order to comprehend what is being said when these words are being heard, it is important to look at the sentence's context.

7. Methods for Overcoming Students' Listening Comprehension Problems

For students to overcome some of their listening comprehension issues, there are some helpful suggestions. These are what they are:

1. Learners should spend more time practising English listening. The more that students practice listening, the more comfortable they become speaking English. The manner and pace of English speakers can be followed by learners if they are familiar with what they hear. Additionally, the students need to work on their grammar and vocabulary.
2. Based on the needs of the students, listening activities should be offered, and teachers should give students authentic listening materials that will help them better understand the speech of native speakers.
3. Teachers should design listening exercises that engage students and promote effective listening habits. These activities encourage students to use a variety of listening strategies in order to get the most out of their activities while also testing their listening comprehension.
4. Practising listening in various contexts, including lectures, radio news, watching videos or films, listening to music, TV plays, announcements, regular conversation and dialogues, some monologues, and interviews. When taking a listening test or class, listening can help students feel less anxious and can also help them develop a

good listening habit. The learners can benefit from practise like this by becoming more accustomed to the accents of various native speakers.

5. The level of complexity at which listening activities are presented should be considered; for example, listening activities for lower level students should start with very simple texts and progress to very complex authentic materials for advanced students.
6. Through the provision of various tasks and activities at various levels, The necessary listening comprehension skills, such as listening for understanding specific information, listening for the main ideas, explanation, and inference, and listening for intended meaning, should be developed by teachers with the help of their students.
7. As required, give background information and linguistic expertise, such as familiarity with idiomatic expressions and complex sentence structures. Additionally, try to give and receive as much feedback as you can. To keep activities meaningful, the teacher and the students should collaborate. It is crucial for teachers to provide students with quick feedback. This can encourage error correction while also promoting it. It can assist students in becoming more confident in their capacity to handle listening issues.
8. Top-down activities encourage students to discuss what they already know about a subject, and bottom-up activities instil confidence in the understanding of linguistic elements like sounds, words, intonation, and grammatical structures. Teachers should give students opportunities to develop both top-down and bottom-up processing skills.



9. One psychological element that affects performance is anxiety. It is expected that some psychological factors that have a negative impact on English achievement can be reduced with more learning opportunities and more time spent learning the language.
10. To develop and strengthen a good habit of listening in themselves, teachers should ask their students to constantly listen to music, documentaries, and news on the radio and television as well as talk to native speakers in person or online.

8. Conclusion:The teaching of listening comprehension has been neglected in many English language programmes. Listening comprehension is a challenging process. Both listening comprehension strategies must be applied at once. One must comprehend the text as we listen to it, retain the information in our memories, put it together with what comes next, and adjust how one comprehends what we hear in light of our prior knowledge and what comes next. Students should learn effective listening techniques from their teachers. There isn't a perfect approach that works for all kinds of English classes. Listening exercises should be arranged from simple to more complex as the students' English language proficiency increases. This study outlined the elements that contributed to some significant issues with learners' listening comprehension and provided teachers and students with some practical suggestions on how to enhance this skill.

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