

BUILDING ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDENTS

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Annotation: One of the most crucial abilities a person can possess is listening. A learner's listening skills have a significant influence on both them and the calibre of their interpersonal relationships. Listening is the hardest talent to master. This article highlights how crucial it is for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners to improve their active listening abilities. It differentiates active listening from passive reception, highlighting its multifaceted nature encompassing comprehension, retention, and strategic response. The paper identifies common challenges faced by EFL learners in listening and comprehensively outlines a range of pedagogical techniques, categorized into pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening phases, designed to cultivate effective active listening. Furthermore, it emphasizes the role of metacognition, authentic materials, and technology in fostering these vital communication competencies.

Keywords: Active listening, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), listening comprehension, pedagogical techniques, metacognition, authentic materials, communication skills, language acquisition, pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening exercises.

The receptive activity of listening is the simultaneous reception and comprehension of speech sounds. In order to turn the detected sound impulses into recorded semantic information, the process of perception involves the analysis and synthesis of various levels of language units (phonemes, morphemes, words, and sentences) (i.e. happens semantic understanding). Language skills are necessary for listening, or comprehending speech. The broad issues of a course and a grade level define the goal of listening instruction. Thus, the development of fundamental listening abilities is one of the first stage's issues. learning to comprehend the speech through listening is a challenge.

As the tutorial in the educational process, listening serves a variety of pedagogical and supporting responsibilities in addition to the primary, really communicative ones. Students' speech activities are stimulated, the training process is managed, students are introduced to new language, speech, and regional geographic material, skills are developed, the achieved level of speech is maintained, feedback efficiency is increased, and self-control is enhanced.

In an increasingly interconnected world, effective communication is paramount, and listening stands as a fundamental, yet often undervalued, component of this process. For learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the ability to comprehend spoken English is not merely a passive reception of sound but an active, interpretative process crucial for successful interaction, academic achievement, and personal growth. Many EFL curricula prioritize speaking, reading, and writing, sometimes treating listening as a precursor rather than a distinct skill demanding

explicit instruction. However, without robust listening skills, learners struggle to understand input, participate meaningfully in conversations, or even learn from linguistic exposure.

Real communication involves a lot of listening, and our next course of action might be influenced by how accurate and comprehensive we believe the information to be. One of the most crucial educational objectives is to help students comprehend how speech sounds. Let's go back to the instances where listening was used as a totally separate speaking activity from actual communication. This occurs when we hear:

- various advertisements,
- news on radio and television,
- various instructions and orders,
- lectures,
- stories interlocutors,
- performances by the actors,
- interlocutor on the telephone conversation, and so on.

Interpreting speech that is received through the ears is the act of listening. The act of receiving language through the ears without interpretation is called hearing. In real life, we may hear someone talk, but we choose not to pay attention to what they are saying. The ability to understand what we hear is a communication skill. People listen to retain meaning or to help them remember what they hear spoken. They listen to provide supporting empathy or to critically assess what they hear. They might create a listener's response or find aesthetic enjoyment in what they hear. They are able to carry out the directions in the text that was heard.

The most commonly utilised language mode is listening. Adults are thought to listen for about half of their conversation time, while students may listen to teachers and each other for up to 90% of the information they learn in school. However, language learners sometimes fail to appreciate the amount of work required to improve their listening skills. Listeners actively participate in the interpretation of what they hear, applying their own language and background knowledge to the information presented in the aural text, rather than passively taking in and recording aural input. Different listening skills are needed for different situations. For instance, academic lectures and informal greetings call for distinct listening skills. Language acquisition necessitates deliberate listening that uses techniques for recognising and deriving meaning from sounds. Considering how crucial listening is to language acquisition and instruction, language instructors must assist their students in developing their listening skills. According to the communicative approach to language instruction, this entails demonstrating effective listening techniques and offering practice in real-world contexts—those that students are likely to come across while using the language outside of the classroom.

Teachers may assist their students get the skills and confidence they need to handle communication issues outside of the classroom by educating them about listening as a talent that demands active engagement and by clearly teaching them listening tactics. They provide their pupils with the groundwork for effective communication in the new language in this way. Pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening activities.

Pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening exercises are the three categories of listening instruction exercises. Activities that prepare you to listen are called pre-listening activities. The teacher providing background information, the students reading something related to listening, the students examining and eliciting from the pictures, the students discussing a topic situation, the students answering questions, the students writing what they know about the listening topic, the students considering what language they might need to understand the oral text, and gaining a thorough understanding of how they will perform the listening task are just a few examples of these pre-listening activities. As they listen to the text, students engage in while-listening exercises. Assisting students in developing the ability to extract meaning from the text they hear is the aim of while-listening exercises. While listening the students are to look at the pictures of the traffic and to put a cross where the rules have been broken Other tasks can be:

- Listen to the text and decide which pictures represent the story.
- Arrange the pictures in the correct order according to the heard text.
- Listen to the text and complete the chart.
- Listen to the text and tick off from the lists the items that have not been mentioned.
- Listen to the text and mark the sentences that follow the text as True or False.
- Listen to the text and complete the gaps in the text.
- Listen to the text and correct the printed version.

Post-listening activities are done after the process of listening is completed. The most common form is to check comprehension. Another purpose of post-listening tasks is to know why some students failed to comprehend the heard text and missed essential points of information. Yet another purpose is to expand on the topic or on the language of the heard text.

Using Authentic Materials and Technology

Authentic Materials. Exposing learners to real-world spoken English through podcasts, news broadcasts, interviews, movie clips, and documentaries is vital. These materials provide exposure to natural speed, various accents, and contextualized language use, preparing learners for real-life communication.

Technology. Digital tools significantly enhance listening instruction. Language learning apps offer adjustable playback speeds, interactive transcripts, and targeted exercises. AI-powered

platforms can provide personalized listening practice and feedback, while online repositories offer vast libraries of diverse audio content.

Authentic materials and situations prepare students for the types of listening they will need to do when using the language outside the classroom.

One-Way Communication

Materials:

- Radio and television programs
- Public address announcements (airports, train/bus stations, stores)
- Speeches and lectures
- Telephone customer service recordings

Procedure:

- Help students identify the listening goal: to obtain specific information; to decide whether to continue listening; to understand most or all of the message;
- Help students outline predictable sequences in which information may be presented: who-what-when-where (news stories): who-flight number-arriving/departing-gate number (airport announcements); «for [function], press [number]» (telephone recordings);
- Help students identify key words/phrases to listen for

Two-Way Communication

In authentic two-way communication, the listener focuses on the speaker's meaning rather than the speaker's language. The focus shifts to language only when meaning is not clear.

In addition to audio resources, students can listen while seeing movie snippets on DVD, video, or the internet. News bulletins can be particularly beneficial because they give students real-world language exposure and social interaction. First of all, pupils observe language being used along with a great deal of paralinguistic behaviour. Secondly, pupils relate the act of viewing something to watching a movie at home. English teachers should give their pupils enough viewing and listening assignments so that they can focus entirely on what they are seeing and hearing because this promotes calm. Lastly, it's important to keep in mind that pupils can view a vast array of movie clips online, picking something that suits their taste and age. The indications are therefore that the combination of the described above types of listening is likely to turn out to be the most appropriate way to encourage students to listen.

As you design listening tasks, keep in mind that complete recall of all the information in an aural text is an unrealistic expectation to which even native speakers are not usually held. Listening

exercises that are meant to train should be success-oriented and build up students' confidence in their listening ability.

Use pre-listening activities to prepare students for what they are going to hear or view.

The activities chosen during pre-listening may serve as preparation for listening in several ways. During pre-listening the teacher may

- ✓ assess students' background knowledge of the topic and linguistic content of the text
- ✓ provide students with the background knowledge necessary for their comprehension of the listening passage or activate the existing knowledge that the students possess
- ✓ clarify any cultural information which may be necessary to comprehend the passage
- ✓ make students aware of the type of text they will be listening to, the role they will play, and the purpose(s) for which they will be listening
- ✓ provide opportunities for group or collaborative work and for background reading or class discussion activities.

Sample pre-listening activities:

- ✓ looking at pictures, maps, diagrams, or graphs
- ✓ reviewing vocabulary or grammatical structures
- ✓ reading something relevant
- ✓ constructing semantic webs (a graphic arrangement of concepts or words showing how they are related)
- ✓ predicting the content of the listening text
- ✓ going over the directions or instructions for the activity
- ✓ doing guided practice.

In the jigsaw listening exercise, students are split up into smaller groups and given different texts to read, all of which are related to the same subject. In order to compile a comprehensive picture, the groups later share information. Examine the following "jig-saw" listening exercise and place it in the designated location using the three-phase framework: Collaborate in pairs. Allow your spouse to use one of the provided note sets to speak. Take your own notes while you listen to the discussion. Talk about your notes with your peers who heard different pieces. Write just one piece of writing and title it.

Techniques or exercises that directly aid in the recollection of hearing input are known as listening strategies. Language learners are helped to adapt their listening behaviour to deal with

a variety of situations, types of input, and listening purposes during the teaching of listening skills because many listening strategies have been developed recently to fit every possible listening situation. There are two general categories of listening strategies: top-down and bottom-up.

Top-down methods are listener-based; they assist the listener in interpreting the concepts he has heard by relying on his prior knowledge of the subject, the listening situation, the type of text, and the language. Top-down strategies are for

- listening for the main idea
- predicting
- drawing inference
- summarizing

On the other hand, Bottom-up strategies are text based where the listeners use linguistic knowledge to understand information. Here the listener relies on the language in the message, that is, the combination of sounds, words, and grammar to arrive at the final message. Bottom-up strategies are to

- concentrate on specific details while listening
- recognize word-order patterns.

But listening comprehension is not constrained either to top-down or bottom-up processing, but it should be an interactive, interpretive process where listeners apply both their prior knowledge and linguistic knowledge in understanding messages. Strategic listeners also use metacognitive strategies to plan, monitor, and evaluate their listening.

Conclusion

In summary, building active listening skills is a cornerstone of English language acquisition. It is not an inherent trait but a set of learnable competencies that can be systematically developed through targeted pedagogical approaches. By adopting a comprehensive framework encompassing pre-listening preparation, engaging while-listening tasks, and consolidative post-listening activities, educators can guide EFL students beyond passive reception to become truly active, strategic, and analytical listeners.

Furthermore, fostering metacognitive awareness empowers learners to understand their own listening processes, identify challenges, and apply effective strategies independently. The integration of authentic materials and leveraging modern technology offer invaluable opportunities for exposure and practice in real-world contexts. Ultimately, by prioritizing the explicit instruction and continuous refinement of active listening, educators can equip English language students with a vital skill that not only enhances their linguistic proficiency but also

empowers them to participate more fully and confidently in the global communicative landscape.

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