

COMPREHENSION, LISTENING SKILLS, AND HERMENEUTIC THEORY

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Abstract: This article provides a scientific and theoretical analysis of the linguo-cognitive and psycho-hermeneutic foundations of comprehension and listening skills. The study explains the perceptual, semantic, and interpretive stages of listening comprehension as a complex type of mental activity. Furthermore, the core ideas of hermeneutic theory — the multi-layered nature of textual meaning, the circular structure of understanding (the hermeneutic “circle”), and the mechanisms of meaning alignment between subject and object — are substantiated in relation to listening processes. The logical-constructive, contextual, axiological, and pragmatic components of comprehension are examined through the lens of contemporary research in cognitive psychology, linguistics, and pedagogical hermeneutics. The findings synthesize scientific conclusions aimed at deepening the understanding of teacher–learner communicative interaction, developing effective listening comprehension strategies, and optimizing meaning interpretation within educational settings.

Keywords: comprehension, listening skills, hermeneutics, hermeneutic circle, linguo-cognitive process, interpretation, semantic analysis, cognitive psychology, speech perception mechanisms, communicative competence, pedagogical hermeneutics.

Introduction. The phenomenon of comprehension and listening skills occupies a central position in contemporary cognitive linguistics and educational psychology, as it represents one of the most intricate forms of human information processing. Listening, far from being a passive perceptual act, embodies a multilayered cognitive-interpretative activity in which the listener continuously decodes acoustic input, reconstructs semantic structures, and generates contextually appropriate meanings. Within this multidimensional process, hermeneutic theory provides a profound philosophical–methodological framework for understanding how meaning is produced, negotiated, and transformed during oral communication.

The Main Part. From a hermeneutic standpoint, the act of understanding is not merely a linear extraction of information but a dynamic interaction between the listener’s prior knowledge, experiential horizons, and the semantic potential of the spoken text. The hermeneutic “circle” — the reciprocal movement between the whole and its parts — manifests vividly in listening comprehension, where individuals simultaneously engage in perceptual analysis, semantic prediction, and interpretive synthesis. Consequently, the development of listening skills entails the refinement of cognitive operations such as inferencing, hypothesis testing, contextual mapping, and evaluative judgement, all of which shape the listener’s ability to construct coherent meaning from transient auditory signals.

In modern pedagogical research, integrating hermeneutic principles into the study of comprehension enriches the theoretical understanding of communicative competence, as it highlights the interpretive agency of the learner and the dialogic nature of meaning-making.

Thus, examining listening comprehension through a hermeneutic lens enables a deeper analysis of how learners internalize, negotiate, and reconstruct meaning within instructional contexts. This article aims to explore these intersections, offering a theoretically grounded and methodologically robust perspective on the cognitive, linguistic, and hermeneutic dimensions of understanding and listening comprehension.

In the context of the modern educational paradigm, the issue of comprehensively developing students' cognitive abilities is becoming increasingly urgent. In particular, listening comprehension and understanding skills — as the fundamental basis of intellectual activity — require special attention. This process is not merely the mechanical processing of perceived information, but rather encompasses complex intellectual operations such as deep perception of incoming data, its systematization, analysis, interpretation of layered meanings, and integration with personal experience.

In today's digital society, where the volume of information is rapidly increasing and the competition between different ideas and viewpoints is intensifying, developing an effective methodology for enhancing students' listening comprehension and meaning-making abilities has become an important scientific and pedagogical task. In searching for solutions to this problem, hermeneutic theory may serve as a significant methodological foundation. Hermeneutics — as a doctrine concerned with the interpretation of texts — has undergone a long historical evolution. Initially emerging as a theory of interpreting religious texts, by the 19th–20th centuries it had transformed into a fundamental philosophical discipline concerned with the universal mechanisms of human thought and cultural understanding.

Hermeneutics offers principles for understanding and interpreting texts not only at the literal level, but also by taking into account context, conditions of creation, the author's intention, the reader's experience, and other essential components. This article aims to reinterpret the core ideas and principles of hermeneutic theory in the context of developing listening comprehension and understanding skills, to systematize pedagogical strategies, methods, and technologies based on the hermeneutic approach, and to investigate their practical application.

The theoretical significance of the study lies in its contribution to deepening the integration between hermeneutic philosophy and contemporary pedagogical theories, offering a new perspective for understanding the complex mechanisms involved in listening comprehension and meaning construction. From a practical standpoint, the results of the research serve as a valuable resource for improving the educational process in higher education institutions, enriching teaching methodologies, increasing the effectiveness of instruction, and enabling students to fully realize their intellectual potential.

Although hermeneutic theory initially emerged in the interpretation of religious texts, today it is applied in a much broader context. It requires taking into account factors such as context, time, and culture in order to achieve a complete and precise understanding of a text or speech. The main purpose of hermeneutics is to help the reader grasp the text not only superficially but also deeply and multidimensionally. This plays an important role not only in the process of language

learning but also in the development of students' cognitive and thinking processes. Listening comprehension, therefore, is an essential skill for success in language acquisition and academic activity. A number of technologies and methods exist for applying hermeneutic theory in educational practice. Some of these include:

1. Contextual interpretation of the text. Before reading or listening to a text, students explore its historical background, cultural context, and the conditions under which it was created. This approach enables a deeper, more meaningful understanding rather than a superficial one.
2. Questioning. In hermeneutic methodology, asking questions plays a crucial role. Students formulate questions during or after listening to the text. This increases their engagement and allows them to interpret the text more deeply.
3. Group discussion. Group discussions and processes of exchanging ideas represent an effective way of applying the hermeneutic method. Through this, students broaden their perspectives, become acquainted with the viewpoints of others, and analyze different interpretations of the text.
4. Analytical and interpretative exercises. Students complete tasks that require analyzing the text during listening or reading, examining its structure, and identifying its main ideas. This contributes to the development of their listening comprehension skills.

The main advantage of hermeneutic theory is that it transforms students from passive listeners into active participants. Students not only listen to the text but also strive to understand its inner meaning. This develops their analytical thinking skills, encourages them to ask questions, and promotes reflection from different points of view. Moreover, the hermeneutic approach teaches students critical thinking, which is essential for achieving academic success. The effectiveness of hermeneutic theory as a methodological foundation for developing students' listening comprehension and understanding skills is becoming increasingly significant in today's educational system. This theory enables learners to move beyond merely listening to a text superficially, allowing them to reach a deeper level of comprehension and interpretation.

First, the hermeneutic approach transforms students into active participants in the listening process rather than passive receivers. Students engage in a dialog with the text, ask questions, make hypotheses, and construct their own interpretations. This process develops not only their listening skills but also their logical, analytical, and critical thinking abilities.

Second, hermeneutic theory teaches students to understand a text within a broad context. They consider the historical, cultural, social, and personal contexts of the material they listen to, which broadens their worldview and shapes their ability to examine phenomena from multiple perspectives.

Third, the hermeneutic approach fosters learners' self-awareness and reflective skills. They not only understand the text but also analyze their own processes of understanding. These

metacognitive skills are essential for effective learning in general.

Fourth, through hermeneutic methods, students learn to perceive the multilayered meanings of texts. This enhances their ability to gain deeper knowledge in such humanities disciplines as literature, art, philosophy, and history.

Fifth, instructional technologies based on hermeneutics — such as hermeneutic dialogue, the hermeneutic circle, interpretation, and reflection — make the learning process more engaging and effective. These technologies encourage students to engage actively in the learning process, collaborate, and express their ideas freely.

In the context of modern globalization and the information society, communication between representatives of different cultures is becoming increasingly important. The hermeneutic approach helps students develop the ability to understand others' perspectives, respect diverse viewpoints, and engage in constructive dialogue. Modern effective methods for teaching listening skills encompass a wide range of approaches, from interactive exercises to multimedia resources. Listening is considered one of the most easily improved skills, because with slightly increased attention and consistent practice, it can be strengthened through simple and engaging activities that ultimately lead to strong learning outcomes. In this case, it does not matter whether you are working with small or large groups of students — applying even one of the methods below is enough to support meaningful development. Specific methods for teaching students effective listening:

Interpersonal activities. Interpersonal activities are among the most effective methods for developing strong listening skills in learners. These include:

1. Role-playing.
2. Mock interviews.
3. Interpersonal dialogues.
4. Storytelling activities, and others.

In this approach, students are divided into small groups of two or three, and they are given prompts or questions tailored to the activity. For example, you may instruct a student to conduct an interview for a company position or for a newspaper article. Storytelling activities can also greatly enhance listening skills by giving students opportunities to ask questions and clarify details.

Group activities. Large-group activities similarly help students develop the ability to understand spoken information in interactive, collaborative settings. Another useful method for teaching listening skills is simple group-based tasks. For the first activity, students can be divided into groups of five or more and instructed to explore one shared interest or at least two hobbies of other group members. In this process, students need to ask clarifying questions. During the

activity, it is advisable to allow them to take notes, as this supports understanding and information retention.

Relying on the hermeneutic approach, the development of listening and comprehension skills in students emerges as an essential didactic competence within the educational process. This approach activates learners' abilities to interpret meaning correctly while listening to a text or conversation, as well as to understand and reformulate the content of communication. During the listening process, the teacher creates specific didactic conditions that help students focus their attention, develop interest in the interlocutor, and grasp the logical connections within speech. For example, the instructor may provide short, point-based cues (signal markers) corresponding to the sequence of the conversation and ask students to arrange them in the correct order. Such an exercise enhances learners' attentiveness, teaches them to anticipate the content of the conversation, and prepares them for the material they are about to hear, thereby motivating active participation in the listening process. Throughout the activity, the teacher guides students to record their own thoughts and to identify the main ideas from the material they have listened to.

Depending on the type of listening material, as well as students' level of preparation and interests, the instructor identifies the task in advance. For instance, while listening to a scientific lecture, an interview, or an audio dialogue, different types of assignments may be used: extracting factual information, interpreting meaning, identifying the main idea, or retelling the text. In this way, the sub-skills of listening—such as perceiving, understanding, synthesizing, and evaluating—are gradually developed step by step.

In subsequent sessions, students engage in activities such as listening to lecture texts, taking notes, analyzing meaning, and reformulating what they have heard. This process enables learners to connect the information they receive with their personal experience through reasoning, inference, and hermeneutic analysis. As a result, listening and comprehension become not only acts of perception but also fundamental components of active participation in communication.

The didactic provision for developing listening and comprehension skills based on the hermeneutic approach. In the listening process, analyzing the structural organization of the text, its themes and subthemes, and the relationships between them is of significant importance. Each text possesses its own semantic system in which ideas unfold sequentially. The connection between themes and subthemes determines the dynamics of speech—that is, the trajectory along which the speaker develops their thoughts. The listener, in turn, understands the overall meaning by perceiving these interrelations.

The success of a listening activity primarily depends on directing students' attention toward the main objective—understanding the text they hear. For this reason, the instructor must provide clear pre-listening instructions and ensure that the task is fully understood. During the listening process, written actions should be minimized, as the primary goal of the activity is to grasp and interpret meaning rather than merely transcribe the text. If written or oral responses are required

after listening, such tasks serve to process and reinforce the information received.

Therefore, post-listening activities should be enriched with practical exercises such as identifying the main idea, analyzing the theme, and focusing on significant elements within the text. The instructor should enable students to monitor their own comprehension during listening, identify errors, and correct them. Pre-listening activities act as an essential scaffold in this process, allowing learners to compare newly received information with their prior knowledge.

Conclusion. Within the framework of a hermeneutic approach, the development of listening and comprehension skills emerges not merely as a linguistic exercise but as a complex cognitive–interpretive process that activates learners’ analytical, reflective, and communicative capacities. Listening, when conceptualized as an act of meaning-construction rather than passive reception, requires learners to reconstruct semantic structures, identify implicit thematic relations, and situate the heard discourse within broader contextual and experiential frameworks. Consequently, the methodological design of listening instruction becomes intrinsically linked to core hermeneutic principles — holistic interpretation of the text, recovery of its internal logic, and the dynamic interplay between the listener’s prior knowledge and newly perceived meanings.

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