

HOW TO IMPROVE ENGLISH LISTENING SKILLS?

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Abstract. *Improving listening skills in English is important in the language learning process. This article will analyze effective methods and strategies for developing your listening skills. The article will first examine the importance of practicing listening through various audio and video materials in English, adapting to accents and speech rates. It will also provide information on how to further improve your listening skills through techniques such as retelling, paraphrasing, and summarizing what you have heard.*

Key words: *Listening comprehension, active listening, listening strategies, listening practice, attention focus, audio materials, video materials, paraphrasing, classroom activities.*

КАК УЛУЧШИТЬ НАВЫКИ АУДИРОВАНИЯ НА АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ?

Аннотация. *Улучшение навыков аудирования на английском языке важно в процессе изучения языка. В этой статье будут проанализированы эффективные методы и стратегии для развития навыков аудирования. В статье сначала будет рассмотрена важность практики аудирования с помощью различных аудио- и видеоматериалов на английском языке, адаптации к акцентам и темпам речи. В ней также будет предоставлена информация о том, как еще больше улучшить свои навыки аудирования с помощью таких методов, как пересказ, парафразирование и обобщение услышанного.*

Ключевые слова: *Понимание услышанного, активное слушание, стратегии слушания, практика слушания, концентрация внимания, аудиоматериалы, видеоматериалы, перефразирование, классные мероприятия.*

WHAT ARE LISTENING SKILLS?

The meaning of the word listening is to pay attention to sound or action. Listening is an apparently simple activity, but it consists of several complex processes. Listening skills contribute to ability to accurately receive information when communicating with others.

Listening is an important part of learning any language, and English is no exception. Strong listening skills help people not only understand English, but also communicate effectively.

Whether they are beginners or advanced learners, improving their listening skills can significantly increase their fluency and comprehension. Listening skills are not just about hearing words; it's about understanding the context, tone, and emotions behind them. Good listeners pay attention to non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice to comprehend the message accurately. They also ask questions to clarify their doubts or seek additional information if required. Therefore, improving your listening skills in English can enhance your overall communication abilities and make you a better communicator.

FOCUS ON COMPREHENSION

Many students tend to let their minds wander when listening. Although we may think we are being respectful by listening quietly, we aren't learning anything from what we hear if our minds wander. Use active recall strategies: Active recall strategies help us take what we've learned and apply it to our everyday lives.

Active recall strategies include: It is underlining key points, writing out specific details or significant concepts on a separate sheet of paper, taking notes or recording important information, and highlighting key vocabulary or phrases that may be particularly useful in conversation and practice with a language partner.

Using various audio and video materials: One of the most effective ways to improve English listening skills is to expose to a wide range of audio and video materials. These materials provide a variety of contexts, accents, speaking speeds, and vocabulary, which can significantly improve listening comprehension.

Exposure to different accents and pronunciations: English is spoken with a variety of accents across the world, including British, American, Australian, Canadian, and many others.

Each accent has its own pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation. By regularly listening to various audio and video materials, pupils can become familiar with these different accents, making it easier to understand English in real-life situations.

Listening comprehension; the skill of understanding and retaining information from sound and spoken language. This skill is crucial for students who spend most of their learning time listening to in-person and virtual lectures.

Another way to help your students improve their listening skills is to teach them specific listening strategies that they can use independently and effectively.

These strategies can help them cope with difficulties, enhance their understanding, and make connections with the material. For example, they can predict what they will hear by using clues such as the title, the speaker, or the context. Additionally, they can skim for the main idea or theme of the material and scan for specific information that they need to complete a task.

Moreover, they can infer the meaning of unknown words or phrases or the speaker's attitude or intention by using clues such as tone, intonation, and word choice.

In a 2010 study, researchers Harry Weger, Gina Castle, and Melissa Emmett asked interviewers to paraphrase comments made by study participants. The researchers found that paraphrasing mostly led to increased likeability of the interviewer, but did not affect how understood participants felt by their interviewer or how satisfied participants were with the conversation. They explained that this may be because paraphrasing indicates agreement with the message. If you feel like a listener agrees with you, you're more likely to have a positive view of them, even if acquiescence alone does not always help you feel understood or satisfied with the conversation. As such, paraphrasing is most effective when used in tandem with techniques that address a speaker's nonverbal cues. [1;15]

Active listening involves mastering a whole host of other skills — from learning how to read subtle cues to controlling emotional response. It requires both empathy and self-awareness.

It is a communication skill that involves going beyond simply hearing the words that another person speaks but also seeking to understand the meaning and intent behind them. It requires being an active participant in the communication process.' (Verywellmind)

It includes:

- the non-verbal and verbal messages that a listener sends back to a speaker to show them that they are listening

- the ability to reflect back to the speaker what has been received – not just the words but an understanding of what has been said

Why is active listening important?

- It is vital for effective communication
- It forces us to slow down communication (providing time to calm if needed)
- It helps prevent miscommunication and misunderstandings
- It can reduce stress and frustration
- It can take the 'heat' out of situations that has, or could, escalate into conflict
- It helps the person speaking feel seen, heard, valued, and validated

- It fosters collaboration
- It breaks down defensiveness and encourages connection

Sabrina Romanoff, PsyD explains, "Active listening requires de-centering from one's fixed position to be fully present with another. It helps people feel more understood and strengthens relationships as it signals a willingness to sit with the other's perspective and empathy for their situation instead of singular focus on oneself."

Active listening involves a healthy combination of critical, reflective, and passive listening.

Active listeners use critical listening to interpret a message and make judgments about the speaker's emotions and nonverbal cues; reflective listening to help the speaker feel heard; and the silence from passive listening to allow the speaker uninterrupted time to get their message across. [1;11]

Why teach listening? seems an odd question. It is standard practice now- days for language teachers to provide sessions that focus on this particular skill. There is a wide choice of listening materials available with accompanying CDs, and DVD or video is used in many classrooms. Nevertheless, there is still plenty of evidence that listening is under-valued. When there is pressure on contact hours, it is often the listening session that is cut. Students are rarely assessed on their listening skills, and the problems of many weak listeners pass undiagnosed. The methodology of the listening lesson has been little discussed, researched or challenged; and there is a tendency for teachers to work through well-worn routines without entire conviction.

Alternatively, a faddish commitment to an 'integrated skills' approach may result in listening being relegated to a hasty topic-driven session wedged between reading and writing, which tend to be regarded as more manageable skills. [2;12]

This passage highlights a paradox in language teaching: while listening is recognized as an important skill, it is often given less attention than reading and writing. Despite the availability of a variety of listening materials, listening sessions are often shortened or neglected in favor of more "manageable" skills. The lack of assessment, under-evaluation of listening, and conventional teaching methods suggest that more attention should be paid to developing effective listening lessons and addressing the problems that weak listeners face. Teachers should review and prioritize listening instruction, ensuring that it is treated as a skill that deserves attention, just like reading and writing.

Suggestions for classroom activities

Understanding foreign speech is a complex activity involving a large number of different skills and abilities. It follows from this that classroom listening practice is also complex, and that no one type of exercise - nor two, nor half a dozen - can possibly satisfy the needs of most foreign-language students. The teacher should therefore have at her fingertips a large battery of different exercises designed to give practice in most, if not all, of these various skills. Moreover, listening should be practised very frequently, so that such exercises will be in constant use. This is not quite so time-consuming as it sounds. Most listening activities suggested here can be easily adapted so that they practise lexical, or functional-notional material that is being learnt anyway in the class.

Many others are very short - taking two or three minutes each - and require little or no preparation. [3:33]

Using podcasts, audiobooks, and songs, or watching movies and TV shows in English are effective ways to make listening to English a daily habit and improve English listening skills.

Listening skill differs from other language skills in which listening is a receptive skill and the main goal in listening skill is to make sense of the speech and find the meanings rather than the language form itself (Sevik, 2012). It acts as the primary means of learning information and incoming ideas defines listening as the process of selecting and assigning meanings to sounds. In a listening process, learners select

important information to listen. This is evidenced in our everyday lives where we indirectly attempt to give importance to things we recognised and what we want to hear.[4;5]

Focusing on Context: Instead of trying to understand every word, focusing on the context and main ideas. This will help students grasp the overall meaning even if they miss some words.

Repeat and Replay: Listening multiple times can help reinforce understanding. Replaying difficult sections or sentences allows you to catch details you might have missed the first time.

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