

EFFECTIVE WAYS TO IMPROVE LISTENING SKILLS AMONG INTERMEDIATE-LEVEL STUDENTS

Abdurahimova Shohista,

*4th year student of the faculty of Foreign Language Nukus State
Pedagogical Institute*

ABSTRACT: *This article explores effective strategies to improve listening skills among intermediate-level learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It highlights the importance of listening as a fundamental skill for communication and examines the challenges faced by learners, such as anxiety, vocabulary limitations, and difficulty with natural speech pace. Drawing on research and literature, the article presents cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies to enhance listening comprehension. It also discusses the role of multimedia tools and practical classroom activities, emphasizing the need for systematic training and consistent exposure to listening materials. This comprehensive guide aims to equip educators and learners with actionable insights for mastering listening skills.*

Key Words: *Listening skills, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Intermediate learners, Cognitive strategies, Metacognitive strategies, Socio-affective strategies, Language acquisition, Listening comprehension, Teaching strategies, Multimedia tools*

Listening is often considered the most challenging of the four essential language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Despite its pivotal role in language acquisition, intermediate-level students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) frequently struggle with listening comprehension. As Nu Nu Wah (2019) aptly puts it, listening is "a demanding and challenging skill for learners to master" because it requires not only hearing words but also processing and interpreting their meaning. This article explores the challenges of developing

listening skills at the intermediate level and outlines effective strategies and techniques to improve them, drawing on research and real-world applications.

The Role of Listening in Language Learning

Listening is the foundation upon which all other language skills are built. It provides the input necessary for acquiring vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Without effective listening skills, learners face barriers in achieving fluency and accuracy in both spoken and written communication.

Listening is also fundamental to real-world language use. As Lindsay and Knight (2006) note, learners need to identify their listening goals, such as understanding specific details, grasping general ideas, or inferring meaning from context. This underscores the active and intentional nature of listening.

Challenges Faced by Intermediate Learners

1. Anxiety and Lack of Confidence

Many students experience anxiety during listening tasks, especially when they cannot immediately understand spoken language. This fear often leads to avoidance, further hindering progress.

2. Limited Vocabulary and Background Knowledge

Learners often encounter unfamiliar vocabulary and cultural references that make comprehension difficult. For instance, idiomatic expressions or regional accents can overwhelm students.

3. Fast and Connected Speech

Native speakers often speak at a natural pace, using reduced forms (e.g., "gonna" for "going to") and connected speech, which are challenging for learners to decode.

4. Lack of Exposure

In many EFL contexts, students are not regularly exposed to authentic English listening materials, limiting their ability to adapt to different accents, speech patterns, and contexts.

Effective Strategies for Improving Listening

To overcome these challenges, educators must employ strategies that engage cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective dimensions of learning.

1. Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive strategies involve direct engagement with listening tasks to process and recall information. They include:

Listening for Key Words and Ideas

Focusing on high-frequency words and main ideas helps learners avoid getting lost in unfamiliar vocabulary. For example, in a news broadcast, students might focus on names, dates, and repeated phrases to grasp the gist.

Inferencing and Guessing Meaning

Students learn to use contextual and linguistic clues to infer the meaning of unknown words. This is particularly useful in conversations where learners may not understand every word but can deduce meaning from context.

Chunking and Segmentation

Breaking down speech into smaller units (e.g., phrases or sentences) helps learners manage and process information more effectively.

Classroom Applications

1. Dictation with a Twist:

Play a recording and have students write down the main points rather than transcribing word-for-word. This trains them to focus on meaning rather than details.

2. Spot the Error:

Provide students with a written transcript containing errors. As they listen, they must identify and correct the discrepancies.

2. Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive strategies involve planning, monitoring, and evaluating the listening process. Research shows that skilled listeners actively manage their listening through these strategies (Vandergrift, 2003).

2.1. Goal Setting

Before listening, students define their objectives, such as understanding the main idea or identifying specific information.

2.2. Self-Monitoring

During listening, learners check their comprehension in real time and adjust their strategies as needed.

Reflective Evaluation

After listening, students assess their performance, identify areas of difficulty, and plan improvements.

The Role of Technology in Listening Development

Technology offers a wealth of resources for improving listening skills:

Podcasts and Audiobooks: Authentic materials expose learners to natural speech patterns and vocabulary.

Interactive Apps: Tools like Duolingo and BBC Learning English provide structured listening practice with immediate feedback.

Videos and Movies: Subtitled content helps learners connect spoken and written forms of language.

Practical Activities to Enhance Listening

1. Shadowing Exercises:

Students listen to a recording and repeat it simultaneously, mimicking pronunciation and intonation.

2. Gap-Fill Activities:

Provide transcripts with missing words for students to fill in as they listen.

3. Listening Logs:

Require students to document their listening practice outside of class, including the material used, main ideas, and new vocabulary learned.

Improving listening skills among intermediate-level students requires a holistic approach that addresses cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective dimensions. As Nu Nu Wah (2019) emphasizes, systematic practice, effective strategies, and exposure to diverse materials can significantly enhance learners' listening abilities. By integrating these methods into the classroom, educators can

empower students to overcome challenges and achieve greater fluency in listening. With consistent effort and support, learners can turn listening from a daunting task into a rewarding skill, paving the way for successful communication in English.

REFERENCE:

1. Gardner, R. C., & MacIntyre, P. D. (1992). "Affective Variables in Second Language Learning."
2. Lindsay, C., & Knight, P. (2006). Learning and Teaching English: A Course for Teachers.
3. Rivers, W. M. (1981). Teaching Foreign-Language Skills.
4. Vandergrift, L. (2003). "Listening to Learn or Learning to Listen?" Annual Review of Applied Linguistics.
5. Wah, Nu Nu. (2019). "Teaching Listening Skills to English as a Foreign Language Students through Effective Strategies." International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development, 3(6), 883-887.