



EXERCISES FOR DEVELOPING LISTENING COMPREHENSION

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ABSTRACT

Listening comprehension is a fundamental skill in second language acquisition, serving as the basis for effective communication and language development. This article explores a variety of instructional exercises designed to improve learners' listening skills at different proficiency levels. The study highlights pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening activities that enhance attention, prediction, note-taking, and critical thinking. Additionally, the role of authentic audio materials, technology-assisted tools, and interactive tasks such as information-gap activities, dictogloss and shadowing are discussed. Findings suggest that diversified and context-rich listening exercises not only strengthen comprehension but also increase motivation and confidence in language learners. The implementation of these strategies in the classroom contributes to a more engaging learning environment and leads to significant improvements in overall listening proficiency.

Listening comprehension is one of the most essential skills in language learning. It supports speaking, vocabulary development, and overall communication. However, many learners struggle with listening because spoken language is fast, variable, and often unpredictable. Therefore, well-designed exercises are necessary to help learners develop effective listening strategies and improve their ability to understand spoken texts. This article discusses the main types of exercises used to strengthen listening comprehension.

1) Listening as an Active Cognitive Process

Listening is **far more than just hearing words**. It involves several mental steps:

Decoding sounds: Learners recognize speech sounds (phonemes) and intonation patterns. This is the foundation for understanding words correctly.

Identifying words and structures: Learners segment the continuous flow of speech into meaningful words, phrases, and grammatical structures.

Interpreting meaning: Understanding the literal meaning, implied meaning, tone, and context.

Connecting new information to prior knowledge: Learners relate what they hear to what they already know, which aids comprehension and memory retention.

This active processing explains why listening is **not passive**; it requires attention, focus, and cognitive engagement.

2) Benefits of Listening Practice

a) Improved Speaking Fluency

Listening exposes learners to natural speech patterns, rhythm, and sentence structures. They internalize correct phrasing and can reproduce it in their own speech.

Repeated exposure helps in **thinking in the target language** rather than translating from their native language.

b) Better Pronunciation

Learners mimic native speaker pronunciation, stress, and intonation.

Listening helps them distinguish between similar sounds and reduce common pronunciation errors.

Pronunciation practice becomes more **authentic and accurate** when grounded in listening.

c) Enhanced Vocabulary Acquisition

Hearing words in context strengthens retention compared to isolated vocabulary lists.

Learners notice collocations, idiomatic expressions, and usage patterns.

Listening also reinforces spelling and word recognition for reading skills.

d) Increased Confidence in Communication

Learners who can understand spoken language are more likely to participate in conversations.

Reduced anxiety during speaking occurs because they can anticipate responses.

Exposure to various accents, speeds, and contexts prepares learners for real-world communication.

Integration of Listening into Language Instruction

Authentic materials: Use podcasts, movies, interviews, and conversations rather.

Active listening exercises: Ask learners to summarize, answer questions, or predict what comes next.

Listening and speaking combination: Pair listening tasks with speaking tasks to reinforce the connection between comprehension and production.

Varied difficulty: Include slow, clear speech for beginners and natural, fast speech for advanced learners to scaffold learning

Exercises for Developing Listening Comprehension.

a) Dictation and Partial Dictation: Improve accuracy in understanding spoken language and noticing details like pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary.

Full Dictation: The teacher reads a passage aloud at normal speed, and learners write down everything they hear.

Benefits: Focuses on exact wording, spelling, and structure.

Tips: Start with short passages and gradually increase length.

Partial Dictation (Gap-Fill): Only selected words or phrases are dictated, leaving blanks for learners to fill in.

Benefits: Encourages learners to focus on key information rather than writing everything down.

Example: "The weather today is _____, and it is expected to _____."

Advanced Variation: Students listen for specific types of words (verbs, adjectives, connectors) to develop more focused listening skills.

b) Selective Listening Tasks: Train learners to pick out important information rather than trying to understand every word.

Techniques:

- a. **Listening for Numbers/Statistics:** Students listen to a news report or lecture and note down dates, times, quantities, or percentages.
- b. **Listening for Specific Information:** For example, in a conversation, learners identify people, places, or events mentioned.
- c. **True/False or Multiple Choice Exercises:** Students listen and decide which statements match the audio.

Benefits: Improves skimming/listening comprehension for key ideas, reduces cognitive overload

c) Interactive Listening Activities: Combine listening with speaking or problem-solving, making comprehension active and meaningful.

Examples:

- a) **Role-Plays:** Students listen to a model conversation and then perform a similar dialogue.
- b) **Information Gap Activities:** Each student has part of the information; they must ask questions to complete a task.
- c) **Simulations:** Listening to instructions for a task (e.g., following directions to “build” something or complete a map) and responding in real time.

Benefits: Encourages active processing and application of what is heard, not just passive understanding.

d) Audio-visual Materials: Enhance comprehension by pairing listening with visual context.

Examples:

- **Movies/TV shows or Short Clips:** Focus on understanding spoken language in real contexts.
- **News Videos or Documentaries:** Help learners understand formal and semi-formal speech.
- **Subtitles:** Can be used initially, then gradually removed for challenge.
- *Techniques:*
- Pause and ask comprehension questions.
- Predict what will happen next.
- Summarize the content in their own words.

Benefits: Supports understanding of context, gestures, tone, and cultural cues

i) Technology-Based Listening Exercises: Use digital tools to provide interactive, personalized, and flexible listening practice.

Examples:

- **Apps & Websites:** Platforms like Duolingo, LingQ, or ELSA Speak provide structured listening exercises.
- **Podcasts & Audiobooks:** Allows learners to adjust speed and replay parts for better understanding.
- **Speech Recognition Software:** Can help learners check pronunciation and understanding.
- **Online Quizzes:** Combine listening with interactive comprehension tasks (multiple choice, drag-and-drop, fill-in-the-blank).

Benefits: Offers flexible, self-paced practice and exposure to authentic materials.

3. FACTORS INFLUENCING LISTENING DEVELOPMENT

The success of listening exercises depends on

LEARNER LEVEL (materials must be appropriate), listening exercises must match the learner’s language proficiency and cognitive skills.

Why it matters:

- Materials that are too easy lead to boredom and little progress.
- Materials that are too difficult cause frustration and reduce comprehension.

Considerations:

- ❖ **Vocabulary:** Ensure learners know the key words before listening.
- ❖ **Speech Speed:** Beginners may need slower speech; advanced learners can handle natural or fast speech.
- ❖ **Complexity:** Use simple sentences for lower levels; higher levels can handle idiomatic expressions, complex grammar, and implied meaning.

Practical Tip: use graded audio materials or adjust playback speed to suit learners' levels.

AUTHENTICITY OF THE AUDIO

Refers to how closely the listening material reflects real-life language use.

Why it matters:

Learners exposed only to artificial or scripted dialogues may struggle in real-world conversations.

Authentic materials include natural speech features: accents, intonation, hesitations, and colloquial expressions.

Examples of Authentic Materials:

Podcasts, interviews, news reports, TV shows, movies, radio broadcasts.

Considerations:

Beginners might need slightly simplified or "semi-authentic" materials to avoid overwhelm.

Advanced learners should tackle fully authentic materials for real-world listening skills.

Practical Tip:

gradually increase authenticity; start with clear recordings, then progress to noisy environments or multiple speakers

CLEAR OBJECTIVES

Every listening task should have a defined purpose, such as understanding the gist, details, or implied meaning.

Why it matters

Without a clear objective, learners may struggle to focus and retain information.

Different objectives require different listening strategies.

Types of Objectives:

1. **Listening for Gist (Main Idea):** Identify the overall topic or general meaning.
2. **Listening for Specific Details:** Pick out names, dates, numbers, or facts.
3. **Listening for Inference/Attitude:** Understand tone, intention, or implied meaning.
4. **Critical Listening:** Evaluate arguments or distinguish fact from opinion.

Practical Tip:

Always tell learners the purpose before they start listening. For example: "Listen for the main idea," or "Listen and write down the numbers mentioned."

TEACHER SUPPORT

Guidance before, during, and after listening to maximize comprehension.

Pre-Listening Tasks:

Introduce key vocabulary, phrases, or background information.

Activate prior knowledge by discussing the topic or showing images

Predict content by asking: "What do you think this dialogue will be about?"

During Listening:

➤ Scaffold understanding by providing note-taking templates, checklists, or questions.

➤ Encourage active listening strategies: highlighting, summarizing, or paraphrasing.

Post-Listening Tasks:

➤ Discussion, summation, or problem-solving activities to reinforce comprehension.

➤ Correct misconceptions and provide feedback.

Why it matters:

Listening is cognitively demanding; teacher guidance helps learners focus on the most relevant parts and develop strategies. Effective instruction combines these elements to reduce listening anxiety and build confidence.

In conclusion, listening comprehension is central to successful language acquisition. Exercises such as dictation, selective listening, interactive tasks, audiovisual materials, and technology-based activities all contribute to building strong listening skills. By selecting appropriate materials and using effective teaching strategies, educators can help learners improve listening comprehension and strengthen their overall language abilities

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