

DEVELOPING LISTENING SKILLS IN AN EFL CLASSROOM: METHODS AND STRATEGIES

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Language serves as a means of daily communication and is crucial for expressing one's ideas, thoughts, and feelings to others. One must study receptive (listening, reading) and productive (writing, speaking) skills for learning a certain language. Learning any language, such as English, involves developing all four skills to interact effectively. Compared to these four skills, listening is the first skill that non-native learners build initially. The process of Listening means 'To pay attention to somebody/something that you can hear' according to Hornby (2005). Although both hearing and listening are often used interchangeably, they depict fundamentally different processes. Therefore, David Nunan explains the main difference between listening and hearing: 'Listening involves not just hearing words, but also processing and understanding the meaning behind them'. Hearing occurs when sounds are simply heard and it is the ability to perceive sounds. Listening, unlike hearing, requires understanding the message, analyzing its meaning, and responding appropriately. Listening is a key skill that helps students understand spoken language and process the information in real-time. Fully comprehending or responding to what is being said is extremely difficult without active listening. For that reason, hearing is a necessary feature of listening that allows for effective communication and language acquisition. Realizing this distinction is vital for language learners as it empowers them to develop better language comprehension and communicate meaningfully.

Language teaching aims to bring up multilateral perfect language users for future life. As language classes involve teachers and students, it is somehow challenging to develop listening skills in students compared to gaining this skill in real-life situations. Modern pedagogy assists students in developing a set of listening strategies that can be adjustable in many real-life situations. Proficient scholars, nowadays, suggest that listening sequences should usually be divided into three parts: pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening. These steps are designed to prepare students for listening, guide them during the listening process, and help them reflect and integrate what they have learned afterward.

Pre-listening activities are crucial in preparing students for listening tasks as they encourage students to anticipate what they are going to hear. Brainstorming, prediction, and discussion activities are frequently used as pre-listening tasks. 'Effective listening tasks often involve an explicit 'pre-listening' step, some activity that the learner does before listening to the main input to increase readiness' [1]. Pre-listening activities are crucial in preparing students for listening. For instance, brainstorming and prediction help learners recall relevant information they already know about the topic.

Listening activities are essential for engaging students actively during the listening process and it improves the effectiveness of learning. While-listening tasks can be divided as follows: gap-filling exercises, multiple-choice questions, labeling a diagram or maps, sequencing events, and so forth...Field (2008) suggests that while-listening tasks should mimic real-life listening contexts, helping students focus on the communicative purpose. For example, gap-filling exercises help students focus on understanding the main ideas and specific details of the text or multiple-choice questions challenge students to evaluate and interpret the information in real time. Labeling questions make students break down the task into manageable steps as they ask students to label a diagram, map, or image based on the information provided in the listening task.

‘Post-listening tasks help students reflect on the content, discuss interpretations, and connect the listening material to their own experiences.’ [2] Post-listening tasks are also frequently useful in strengthening listening skills as they reinforce comprehension and encourage students to integrate listening with other language skills. Discussion, summarizing, and mind-mapping activities are often considered the most effective post-listening skills. Teachers can ensure that learners process the material deeply, integrate it into their prior knowledge, and use it in real practice.

The division of listening activities into pre-, while-, and post-listening stages addresses different skills (prediction, comprehension, reflection) and learning styles. By integrating these stages, teachers could provide a comprehensive framework that supports students in becoming confident and skilled listeners.

Once teachers have established the basic importance of the listening stages, it is equally important to learn specific techniques that will further enhance learner’s listening skills. Some of the most effective techniques include summarizing, repeating, paraphrasing, and predicting, each of which has its benefits for students.

1. Repeated listening allows students to review the same audio multiple times. This technique is invaluable for noticing different pronunciation units, unfamiliar words, or words that may have been overlooked during the first listening. This ensures that students understand the material more fully.

2. Paraphrasing is another valuable technique that helps students engage with the material. ‘Paraphrasing is a valuable skill because... it shows you understand the source well enough to write it in your words’ [3]. By restating the content in their own words, students can develop flexibility in vocabulary and sentence structure, ensuring that they fully understand the message. For example, after listening to a description of a historical event, a student might paraphrase it as “This happened in the 1800s when people were fighting for their independence.” This not only increases comprehension but also increases confidence in expressing ideas.

3. Predicting is an active listening strategy that encourages students to predict what might happen next in the audio based on contextual clues, prior knowledge, or visual cues. This technique sharpens attention and makes listening purposeful because students confirm or modify their predictions as they listen. For example, if the topic is about shopping, students might hear words like “price,” “discount,” or “checkout,” which prepares them to listen carefully.

4. Summarizing, on the other hand, encourages students to focus on the main points of the material. ‘Effective summarizing requires capturing the essence of a message without distorting its meaning’ [4]. By expressing the main ideas in their own words, they increase their ability to critically process information and retain important details. This technique also helps to bridge the gap between passive listening and active comprehension, making it a very effective learning tool.

Although these methods are different, they complement each other to provide a comprehensive approach to developing listening skills. By engaging students in active, critical, and repetitive listening tasks, these methods upskill learner’s knowledge they need to be effective listeners in any context.

Several studies were reviewed to understand the effectiveness of different listening strategies, including predicting, paraphrasing, and summarizing. These studies often examine how these strategies, often included in pre-listening, during-listening, and post-listening activities, contribute to the development of students’ listening and comprehension skills. The results of each study are presented below.

The study, conducted at the University of Computer Science, Mandalay, involved 30 computer science students and examined the effects of different listening activities on

comprehension. Among these activities, content prediction and introduction to basic vocabulary were central to the pre-listening activities. The study found that:

Pre-listening activities such as content prediction made up a comprehension score of 8.2. This suggests that prediction mentally prepares learners for the listening task, enhancing their ability to engage with the content.

Listening activities that included summarizing while listening resulted in a 9.2 increase in comprehension scores. This implies that summarizing during listening allows students to effectively grasp the main ideas.

Post-listening activities, such as answering comprehension questions or summarizing content after listening, were slightly lower, with an average of 7.8. This suggests that while summarizing after listening helps reinforce comprehension, it is not as effective as active listening.

These results suggest that repetition and prediction are particularly effective during the listening task whereas summarizing is less effective after listening (Academia.edu, 2023).

A study of 60 female EFL students examined how pre-listening content prediction and summarizing affected their listening comprehension. The study found that:

Pre-listening prediction activities helped students better prepare for listening by activating their prior knowledge.

Post-listening summarization allowed students to enhance their understanding by reflecting on the content of what they heard. Although the study did not provide specific numerical scores, both activities significantly improved students' overall listening skills.

This indicates that prediction helps students better guess the content they will hear and summarizing ensures that they understand the main points of the listening task. (pls. academy publication.com,2023).

A survey of faculty at Hanoi University of Industry revealed their progress in the use of prediction and summarization in listening teaching:

Pre-listening prediction activities were used by 100% of the faculty, indicating the importance of prediction in preparing students for the listening task.

During the listening process, 100% of teachers used paraphrasing and summarizing, indicating the importance of active engagement with the material during the listening process.

Post-listening summarizing was used by only 65% of teachers, not all teachers can use it consistently due to time limits or lack of student interest.

These findings illustrate that predicting and paraphrasing are integral parts of pre-listening and during-listening activities respectively, while summarizing remains an important but less universally implemented activity (SlideShare.net,2023).

Table: Survey results on Predicting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing in Listening activities:

Study	Pre-Listening	While-listening	Post-Listening
University of Computer Studies, Mandalay	Predicting:8.2/10	Paraphrasing:9.2/10	Summarizing: 7.8/10
EFL Students (60 female learners)	Predicting: Improves comprehension	Paraphrasing: Improves comprehension	Summarizing: Improves comprehension 1
Teachers at Hanoi University of Industry	100% of teachers use prediction	100% of teachers use paraphrasing	65% of teachers use summarizing

Research findings show that prediction, paraphrasing, and summarizing are effective strategies for improving listening comprehension, each with specific benefits at different stages of the listening process.

Prediction, which is mainly used in the pre-listening stage, is an important strategy for activating students' prior knowledge. This method mentally prepares students for listening as it increases their engagement and comprehension. By predicting content in advance, students are more motivated to listen actively, which eventually leads to improved performance. However, prediction is most effective when students have background knowledge of the topic. If the topic is unfamiliar, students may struggle to make accurate predictions, and this could cause some misunderstandings and confusion during the listening task.

Paraphrasing during the listening process has proven to be a valuable way to enhance comprehension. This encourages students to actively engage with the material as they restate key ideas in their own words. Paraphrasing not only develops comprehension but also develops students' language skills by strengthening their vocabulary and sentence structures. The downside is that paraphrasing can be time-consuming once it limits the amount of content students can listen to. It can also be challenging for less proficient students, as they may not have the language skills necessary to express themselves effectively.

By summarizing key ideas after listening, students can reflect on what they have learned, which can enhance retention. This reflective activity improves their understanding and helps them remember the content over time. However, summarizing is a more passive activity compared to predicting and paraphrasing. Because it occurs after the listening task, it may not be as engaging and may not be as useful if some students have already grasped the main ideas during the listening process.

V.CONCLUSION

This article highlights the effectiveness of some methods and strategies for listening comprehension. Predicting activates prior knowledge and prepares students for listening, while paraphrasing helps them to guess the content beforehand. Summarizing reinforces understanding and helps learners for better language usage. As Rod Ellis (2003) has noted, "The more the learner is involved in the process of using language, the more likely it is that learning will occur." While each method has its advantages, they are most effective when used at the right stages of the listening process. Post-listening activities, particularly summarizing, play a key role in strengthening knowledge even when used less frequently. In conclusion, using these strategies in a balanced combination can significantly improve students' listening skills.

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