

LEARNERS' DIFFICULTIES IN THE LISTENING COMPREHENSION PROCESS AND STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING THEM

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Abstract: This article analyzes the main difficulties that students face in the process of listening comprehension and effective strategies for overcoming them. Listening comprehension is one of the complex components of language learning, which requires the simultaneous understanding of phonetic, lexical and semantic units. The study examines the difficulties of students in perceiving fast speech, limited vocabulary, problems in distinguishing different accents and pronunciations, and obstacles to understanding connected speech. The article also substantiates strategies aimed at facilitating the listening process - such as pre-listening, listening aimed at general understanding of the content, using context, re-listening and writing down. The results of the study show that students' listening comprehension skills can be effectively developed through a systematic approach and regular practical exercises.

Keywords: listening comprehension, listening difficulties, strategies, speech rate.

Introduction

Today, listening comprehension is one of the most important, but also one of the most complex processes in learning a foreign language. Because listening requires not only hearing, but also the ability to quickly understand, analyze, and comprehend the content of the speech heard. Many students encounter difficulties at this stage. Despite their knowledge of grammar or sufficient vocabulary, they have difficulty understanding real speech. The main reason for this is that real-life speech is not as slow and clear as in a textbook. The speed of speech is high, words are connected to each other, some sounds are omitted or changed. In addition, various accents and pronunciation differences also make listening comprehension difficult. As a result, the student cannot fully understand what he hears, and this also negatively affects his motivation.

Another important problem is the wrong approach of students to the listening process. Many try to understand every word, and for this reason they lose the general meaning. In fact, understanding the main idea is more important in listening. Therefore, identifying listening comprehension

difficulties and developing effective strategies to overcome them is a pressing issue. The purpose of this article is to analyze the problems that students encounter in the listening process and to show practical methods that will help them overcome them.

Literature review

The problems of listening comprehension and its development have been studied by many researchers. In particular, Jack C. Richards, evaluating listening skills as one of the main components of language learning, emphasizes the need for special methodological approaches to its development [5]. In his opinion, the listening process includes not only hearing, but also active understanding and interpretation. Gary Buck also explains the process of listening comprehension as a complex psycholinguistic activity [3]. He associates the main difficulties in listening with the speed of speech, unfamiliar vocabulary and the level of prior knowledge of the listener. According to his research, students often have difficulty understanding the general content due to their inability to divide speech into segments.

Rost Michael shows the importance of strategies in the listening process. He emphasizes the need for prior preparation, understanding the context and focusing on the main meaning for effective listening [8]. In addition, Underwood Mary explains the difficulties in listening with several factors [7]. He cites problems such as speech rate, limited repetition, pronunciation differences, and rapid attention span as the main obstacles. The reviewed scientific sources show that listening comprehension is a complex process that requires specific strategies and systematic exercises to develop. Therefore, research in this area is of great importance in the educational process.

Methodology

This study used qualitative and quantitative approaches to identify the difficulties students face in listening comprehension and ways to overcome them. The study involved students learning English at the elementary and intermediate levels. Several methods were used in the data collection process. First, a questionnaire was administered to identify students' listening difficulties. The questionnaire asked questions about speech rate, unfamiliar words, accent, and attention. Also, tests were organized based on special audio materials to determine the level of students' listening comprehension. The study also used the observation method. During the lesson, students' behavior during listening, situations in which they encountered difficulties, and how they reacted to them were studied. This allowed for a more accurate analysis of the problems [6].

In addition, an experimental method was used. Students were taught various strategies to improve their listening skills, preparation, re-listening,

gisting, and note-taking. These strategies were then applied over a period of time and the results were compared. The results of the study were analyzed to identify the main difficulties in listening comprehension and the most effective methods to overcome them.

Results and analysis

The most noticeable thing during the study was that students found listening difficult, and for good reason. Many people have difficulty with this skill, both during the lesson and during the test. When we looked at the reasons, the speed of speech came first. Students said that as soon as the audio starts, they understand a sentence or two, and then they “lose it”. Because the speech is spoken quickly, the words are connected to each other, and they do not have time to hear them separately [2].

Another obvious problem is unfamiliar words. But the interesting thing is that the problem is not only in not knowing the words. Many students think that they do not understand the whole sentence when they hear one or two unfamiliar words and stop there. In fact, they could understand the general meaning. So, the problem is also in the approach. Another situation was revealed during the analysis: students are very tense when listening. They try to catch every word. As a result, they don’t hear the next sentence. That is, they are organizing their listening incorrectly. This is especially common among new learners.

The issue of accent also has a significant impact. Students are often used to only one pronunciation. If the audio is different, they get confused. For example, even a simple word may not be recognized if it is pronounced differently. After that, we tried some simple strategies. For example, guessing the topic before listening, trying to understand only the general meaning on the first listen, and then separating the details. The result gradually began to change. Students felt more relaxed, their anxiety decreased. Listening again was also very useful. The parts that they did not understand the first time became clearer the second or third time. Another useful method is writing. Students began to grasp the content better by writing down important words. The biggest change was that students realized that they didn’t have to understand every word. This changed their attitude towards listening.

Discussion

The results of this study showed that listening comprehension difficulties are not only related to language knowledge. That is, students may have difficulty understanding real speech, despite knowing grammar or having sufficient vocabulary. This situation once again confirms the complexity of the listening process. Listening is not just about hearing, but also about quickly understanding, selecting, and understanding the content [4].

During the discussion, it became clear that one of the main problems is the wrong approach of students. Many try to understand every word while listening. As a result, they lose the general meaning. In fact, it is more important to catch the main idea for effective listening. When this approach was explained to students, their results began to improve. It was also confirmed that the issue of speech speed and accent is also an important factor. Students are more accustomed to artificial, slow speech. In real speech, the speed is higher and the pronunciation changes. Therefore, it seems necessary to gradually complicate the listening materials [3]. The effectiveness of the strategies used was also discussed during the study. In particular, the methods of advance preparation, re-listening and recording helped the students a lot. This shows that it is important to use the right methods, not only to listen a lot, but also to use the right methods. Another important aspect is the psychological state of the students. Many are afraid of listening or lack confidence. This negatively affects the result. After the strategies were used, the students' confidence increased and they began to look at the listening process differently.

Conclusion

This study showed that listening comprehension is one of the most difficult but essential skills for students. It was found that the problem is not only in not knowing the words or understanding the grammar, but also in the inability to properly organize the listening process. Students often try to understand every word, losing the general meaning, or are afraid of fast speech and find it difficult to listen. The results of the study showed that if students are taught simple and clear strategies, their listening results will improve significantly. For example, methods such as first focusing on understanding the general meaning, then isolating the details, re-listening and writing down important points have proven to be useful in practice. Most importantly, when students realize that they do not have to understand every word, the listening process becomes much easier for them. Regular practice and the use of various audio materials are also of great importance in developing listening. The more a student hears, the faster they adapt and their comprehension improves.

In general, listening comprehension difficulties are difficult to completely eliminate, but they can be reduced. This requires the right approach, effective strategies, and constant practice.

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