



PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS IN TEACHING LISTENING SKILLS TO B1-LEVEL STUDENTS

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MAQOLA HAQIDA	ANNOTATION
<p>Qabul qilindi: 24-dekabr 2024-yil Tasdiqlandi: 26-dekabr 2024-yil Jurnal soni: 13 Maqola raqami: 88 DOI: https://doi.org/10.54613/ku.v13i.1098</p> <p>KALIT SO'ZLAR/ КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА/ KEYWORDS</p> <p>B1-level students, listening skills, accents, listening comprehension, active listening, motivation, listening strategies, listening practice.</p>	<p>This article discusses the challenges faced by B1-level students in learning listening skills and offers practical solutions to address these difficulties. The problems identified include limited vocabulary, difficulty understanding fast speech and varied accents, the challenge of listening for specific information, inconsistent practice, cultural context misunderstandings, and passive listening habits. Solutions proposed include pre-listening vocabulary preparation, gradual exposure to faster speech, targeted listening tasks, and incorporating diverse materials to keep students engaged. Active listening strategies, cultural background information, and consistent feedback are emphasized as critical to improving students' listening comprehension.</p>

Introduction. In today's globalized world, effective communication skills in English have become a necessity for academic, professional, and personal growth. Listening, as one of the core language skills, plays a critical role in developing learners' overall communicative competence. However, teaching listening skills to B1-level students presents unique challenges due to varying levels of prior knowledge, motivation, and exposure to authentic listening materials. These challenges often hinder students' progress in achieving fluency and comprehension. Therefore, identifying the problems faced by learners and exploring practical solutions is essential for improving the effectiveness of listening instruction at this level. This study aims to address these issues and provide actionable strategies for educators.

We can cite the following resolutions, including those on foreign language teaching. Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan:

Within the framework of the "Strategy of Actions on Five Priority Areas of Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017–2021", special attention is paid to improving the quality of education and enhancing the effectiveness of learning foreign languages. Within the framework of this strategy, a number of measures have been developed to improve the methodology of teaching foreign languages, including English, and to introduce modern technologies into the educational process.

Resolution of the Ministry:

The resolution "On Measures to Improve the Effectiveness of Teaching Foreign Languages", adopted by the Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2021, sets out the tasks of introducing modern audiovisual materials into the education system to develop listening skills, conducting advanced training courses for teachers, and developing assessment criteria for listening comprehension.

These decisions serve as a basis for solving problems encountered in teaching listening comprehension to students at level B1. Teaching listening skills to students at the B1 level can present a unique set of challenges, as learners at this stage are transitioning from basic to intermediate proficiency. They can understand everyday expressions and phrases but often struggle with more complex listening tasks involving varied accents, faster speech, or implicit meanings. In this article, we will explore common problems in teaching listening skills to B1 students and suggest practical solutions to overcome these challenges. The following problems are encountered when teaching students listening skills: Limited Vocabulary and Difficulty with Complex Language, Fast Speech and Different Accents, Difficulty in Listening for Specific Information, Lack of Motivation and Inconsistent Practice, Understanding Cultural Contexts and Implicit Information, Passive Listening Habits.

To expand on the first problem, students at the B1 level may have a limited vocabulary that restricts their ability to understand more nuanced or technical language in listening tasks. Complex structures, idiomatic expressions, and slang can be difficult to grasp, making comprehension a challenge.

The second is that one of the most important challenges at the B1 level is the problem of understanding fast, natural speech and a range of accents. At this stage, students may encounter speech that is very fast, incomprehensible, or has a regional accent, which makes it difficult for them to keep up.

Another major third problem is that B1 level students often struggle to filter out irrelevant details and focus on specific information when listening. They may try to understand everything and miss the main points of the audio.

The 4th problem I mentioned is that listening skills need to be practiced frequently to improve, but students at B1 level often struggle to stay motivated. Inadequate practice or lack of variety in listening activities can lead to disengagement and slow progress.

The fifth problem is that at B1 level, students may often have difficulty understanding cultural nuances, humor, or hidden messages embedded in spoken language. Idiomatic expressions, jokes, and culture-specific references can be difficult to understand without prior knowledge of the culture in question.

Literature review

In their article titled "The impact of video dubbing app on Chinese college students' oral language skills across different proficiency levels", Sangmin-Michelle and Xiaron Wang wrote that they conducted a similar experiment in a remarkable way. According to them: This study used mixed methods. Specifically, quantitative data were collected and analyzed first, and then qualitative data were collected to further explain the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The explanation used mixed methods sequentially. The quantitative data collection included pre- and post-tests of oral language performance, which were administered before and after the dubbing tasks. The qualitative data included students' opinions on improving oral communication skills. Before comparing the pre- and post-test scores for listening, Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) and Shapiro-Wilk (SW) tests were conducted to check for deviations from the norm. The KS test results showed that they were not normal ($p = .004$, $p = .034$). Therefore, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was conducted to compare the pre-test and post-test listening scores within the same group of students. As shown in Table 2, there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test listening scores ($p = .000$).

In JEAP specifically, with the exception of the 2011 Special Issue on academic listening, which includes four state-of-the-art articles, there appears to be relatively little research into academic listening assessment over the 20 years of the journal's existence. Lynch

(2011) attributed this to the 'inherent complexity of listening and listening research' due to the numerous internal and external factors that can impact on listening ability as well as the difficulty of researching listening effectively' (p. 80). He states that this is not a criticism of the journal's editorial policy but a reflection of 'a wider neglect of listening' (p. 80). Indeed, his review of the research published in JEAP up to that point reveals that, out of just nine listening-focused articles, only one, a study by Read (2002), focussed on EAP listening assessment.

Nine years later, in their review of 416 JEAP articles between 2002 and 2019, Riazi et al. (2020) found that only six articles (just over 1%) focussed on academic listening whereas there were 276 (approximately 66%) articles on academic writing. Only 38 studies (9%) reported on more than one modality, e.g. reading and writing or listening and speaking.

Early pedagogy and research focussed largely on bottom-up approaches to listening comprehension with the emphasis on phoneme, syllable and word level processing (Dirven & Oakeshott-Taylor, 1984, p. 326). By the 1970s and 1980s, the emphasis was on the integration of both lower- and higher-level linguistic processes (Voss, 1984) and the difficulties that learners encounter with listening. These include discourse structure (Godfrey, 1979), internal and extraneous difficulties (Zimmerman, 1980, in Dirven & Oakeshott-Taylor, 1985, p. 7) and the effect of memory on listening comprehension (Richards, 1983). In the 1990s and 2000s, with the developments that new technology had brought, researchers started to investigate the impact of different input formats (Brett, 1995; Coniam, 2001; Gruba, 1997; Ockey, 2007) and were proposing ways of teaching (Field, 2008) and assessing listening comprehension (Coniam, 2001) based on the findings.

Around the same time, research in English for Academic Purposes was gaining momentum. Research into academic listening in the 1980s and beyond examined features of listening comprehension and lecture comprehension (Dunkel & Davis, 1994; Miller, 2009; Young, 1994). Richards (1983) presents a list of micro-skills required when listening to lectures, noting, among other aspects, the need to 'identify relationships among units within discourse', the 'ability to identify the role of discourse markers in signaling structure of a lecture', the 'ability to follow different modes of lecturing: spoken, audio, audio-visual', the 'ability to follow lecture (sic) despite differences in accent and speed' and 'to recognize irrelevant matter' (p. 229–230).

Although Richards' (1983) list of micro-skills for academic English has been criticised for being limited to just academic lectures, research has investigated some of these skills over the last three decades. For example, areas of focus have included note-taking (Carrell, 2007; Chaudron et al., 1994; Dunkel, 1988; Siegel, 2018; 2020) and speech rate (Griffiths, 1990; Révész & Brunfaut, 2013; Robinson et al., 1997).

The importance of understanding discourse structure (Camiciottoli, 2004; Dudley-Evans, 1994; Zare & Keivanloo-Shahrestanaki, 2017) and the use of discourse markers (Chaudron & Richards, 1986; DeCarrico & Nattinger, 1988; Thompson, 2003) have also received a good deal of attention. Several studies have found that clearly signposted discourse can benefit both L1 and L2 learners (DeCarrico & Nattinger, 1988; Rickards, Fajen, Sullivan, & Gillespie, 1997). More recently, Zare and Keivanloo-Shahrestanaki (2017) found that an understanding of how importance is marked in academic lectures can improve comprehension of the main points. Other areas that have been investigated in relation to EAP listening include factors affecting performance including vocabulary acquisition (Paribakht & Webb, 2016; Vidal, 2003) and text length (Carrell et al., 2004; Locke, 1977).

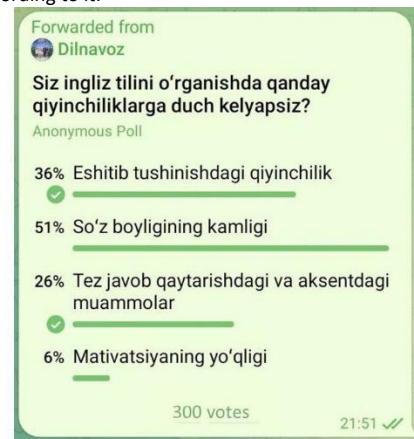
The impact of lecture length in both live and asynchronous lectures has been investigated over the years. Locke (1977) found that there was a 17% drop on average between the quantity of lecture notes taken in the first 20 min of a lecture and those taken in the last 10–30 min of 50–70 min lectures. More recently, Inman and Myers (2018) cite several authors who recommend that lectures should be broken down into 10–15 min sections (p. 3). In an asynchronous environment, studies have found that students' attention span may be even shorter. Guo et al. (2014) found a significant drop in engagement when students were presented with videos which were longer than 9–12 min and the median engagement time was 6 min (p. 44).

Research methodology. Research methodology. The scientific article used research methods such as research on current issues,

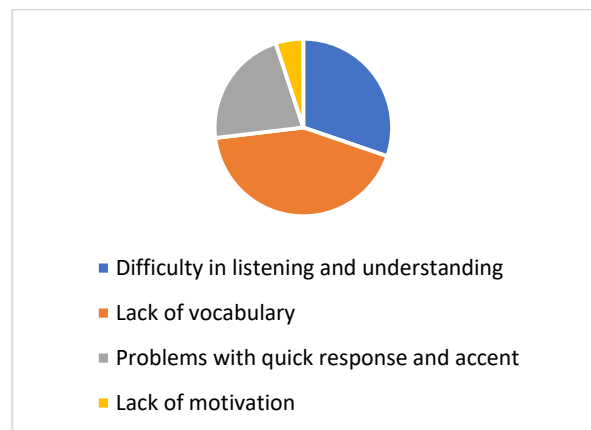
detailed study, analysis of numbers, observation, comparison, systematization of the results of the analysis, development of proposals and recommendations, targeted development, observation, comparison. Grounded theory aims to develop comprehensive explanations of a particular phenomenon. The method is usually used to create theories based on systematically collected and analyzed data. According to Strauss and Corbin, "The goal of grounded theory research is to explain phenomena on the basis of theoretical foundations that develop during the course of the study itself." Structural theory uses systematic methods to identify concepts and create a theory based on qualitative data collection. In accordance with the principles of grounded theory, we collected and analyzed our data in an iterative manner to achieve a level of theoretical saturation

Research results. In order to increase the B1 level of students, we conducted a survey among 300 students at Kokand University. According to it, we gave the main 4 reasons that prevent them from learning English. Students participated in this survey and chose their own problem in learning English.

According to it:



According to this survey:



Discussion. Above I have listed 6 problems in improving students' knowledge and learning of English. Now we need to find solutions to these problems.

The first problem was the difficulty associated with limited vocabulary and complex language. To mitigate these difficulties, pre-listening activities are essential. Teachers can introduce key vocabulary and phrases before the listening activity. This can be done through word banks, matching exercises, or context-based discussions that prepare students for the listening content. Additionally, teachers should integrate listening practice that focuses on contextual guessing, where students learn to infer the meaning of unknown words based on surrounding clues. Using simplified materials, such as graded podcasts, and ensuring the level of complexity aligns with the students' abilities, can further help. Encouraging students to listen to content that introduces new vocabulary in context—such as stories, news reports, or dialogues—helps them improve their listening comprehension over time. This also helps them become familiar with common expressions used in different contexts, gradually expanding their vocabulary range.

As a solution to the second problem I identified, it is important to start with slower, clearer listening materials to help students overcome these difficulties. Teachers should choose resources that are specifically designed for B1 learners, offering slower, clearer speech. As students progress, teachers can gradually introduce faster speech and a variety of accents, starting with neutral English accents and gradually incorporating regional variations. Using audio with transcripts can also be an effective strategy. This allows students to read along as they listen, which helps them connect spoken words to written forms. After listening, students can review difficult sections by listening back to short excerpts, focusing on understanding key words and phrases. Teachers can encourage students to break the audio into smaller chunks to reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed. Listening to the same material multiple times at different speeds also helps students adapt to different speech patterns.

3 of the problems listed above is Difficulty Listening for Specific Information. To address this problem, teachers should emphasize targeted listening tasks. Before beginning listening exercises, give students specific instructions about what they need to listen for—specific numbers, dates, names, or other key details. Teachers can also practice listening for specific information through exercises such as fill-in-the-blanks, multiple-choice questions, or matching tasks. For example, students can be asked to listen to a conversation and write down key details such as time, place, or main topics. This practice not only helps students focus, but it also reduces cognitive load, allowing them to be more effective listeners. Audio that presents information in a variety of formats, including interviews, advertisements, or radio broadcasts, can also be helpful, exposing students to different ways of presenting information.

Problem 4: Lack of motivation and consistent practice. To keep students motivated, teachers need to include a variety of interesting and engaging listening materials. These can include podcasts, TED talks, songs, or video clips, which not only provide listening practice but also engage students with different emphases and interesting topics. Teachers can connect listening activities to real-life scenarios, such as watching a conversation or listening to the weather forecast, which increases the relevance of the task for students. Group activities can also improve motivation. For example, students can listen to a conversation or debate and then discuss or summarize the information together. This collaborative learning environment encourages participation and makes the process more interactive. In addition, regular feedback and positive reinforcement are important. Recognizing improvements, no matter how small, motivates students and helps them recognize their achievements.

Another major challenge is cultural contexts and misunderstandings. To help students learn cultural nuances, teachers should provide background information before a listening task. This could include explaining cultural references or discussing customs that may appear in the listening material. For example, before listening to a podcast or watching a video about a particular country, teachers could explain key cultural aspects and provide context. It can be helpful to include listening activities that require students to interpret humor, irony, or indirect communication. After completing a listening task, students should be encouraged to reflect on what they heard and discuss any cultural differences or misunderstandings they encountered. This reflection can help deepen students' cultural understanding and enhance their ability to interpret implicit information.

And finally, the last problem: passive listening habits. Teachers can encourage active listening by introducing specific listening strategies, such as predicting content, listening for tone and emotion, or asking questions to clarify understanding. Activities such as summarizing main ideas, taking notes, or discussing the content with peers later can help students stay engaged and reflect on what they

have heard. Teachers can also design tasks that require students to engage with the material at different levels. For example, students can listen to a story and then retell it in their own words, focusing on key details. Alternatively, they can listen to a debate or discussion and express their opinions on the topics discussed. These tasks not only actively engage students, but they also teach critical thinking and speaking skills along with listening.

Conclusion

Teaching listening skills to B1-level students involves addressing several challenges, from limited vocabulary and fast speech to cultural misunderstandings and motivation issues. By using a variety of teaching strategies, such as pre-listening activities, targeted exercises, and diverse materials, teachers can help students overcome these obstacles. Gradual exposure to more complex tasks, along with a focus on specific listening strategies, enables B1 students to improve their comprehension skills and gain confidence in their ability to understand spoken language in real-life situations. Consistent practice, combined with an engaging and supportive learning environment, will equip students with the tools they need to succeed in mastering listening skills.

Suggestions and Recommendations for Improving Skills and Knowledge for B1-Level Students:

1. Enhancing Reading Skills and Vocabulary:
 - Spend 15–20 minutes daily reading articles, stories, or blogs in English.
 - Write down unfamiliar words from the text and learn them in context.
 - Use flashcards or vocabulary apps to memorize new words effectively.
 2. Strengthening Grammar and Structure:
 - Review one grammar topic daily and complete related exercises.
 - Focus on applying learned grammar rules in writing and speaking.
 - Utilize grammar books or online resources designed for B1-level learners.
 3. Developing Listening Skills:
 - Regularly listen to podcasts, audiobooks, or videos appropriate for B1 level.
 - Pay attention to new phrases and pronunciation.
 - Retell the material briefly to check your understanding.
 4. Improving Writing Skills:
 - Write short essays, journals, or notes on chosen topics daily.
 - Analyze your writing or seek feedback from a teacher.
 - Incorporate phrases and expressions suitable for B1 level.
 5. Practicing Speaking:
 - Join language clubs or conversation groups.
 - Make it a habit to speak in English for 10–15 minutes daily.
 - Record yourself speaking and analyze your performance.
 6. Using Engaging and Effective Resources:
 - Explore interactive learning platforms like Duolingo, BBC Learning English, or LingQ.
 - Watch movies and series in English with subtitles.
 - Learn English through games (e.g., "Scrabble" or "Wordle").
 7. Setting Goals and Working with a Plan:
 - Set weekly and monthly learning objectives.
 - Create a study plan and stick to it consistently.
 - Track your progress and maintain high motivation levels.
 8. Self-Assessment:
 - Regularly assess your knowledge through tests and exercises.
 - Start preparing yourself for B2-level materials.
- By consistently applying these suggestions, B1-level students can achieve significant and efficient progress.

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