

Improve English Listening Methods for Thai Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to present the improve English listening methods for Thai students listening skill is key to receiving messages effectively. It is a combination of hearing what another person says and psychological involvement with the person who is talking. Listening is a skill of Language. It requires a desire to understand another human being, an attitude of respect and acceptance, and a willingness to open one's mind to try and see things from another's point of view. It requires a high level of concentration and energy. It demands that we set aside our own thoughts and agendas, put ourselves in another's shoes and try to see the world through that person's eyes.

In this paper we will discuss various aspects of Listening. These aspects are what is listening, different types of listening, its various modes , importance of listening in life ,various barriers which hinder the process of listening and ways to improve Listening skill.

Keywords: Improve; English Speaking Methods

Introduction

Listening is a creative skill. In order to comprehend the sounds falling on our ears, we take the raw material of words, arrangement of words, and the rise and fall of the voice, and from this material we create significant. But many teachers have assumption that it is not important to plan the lessons. In fact, shows the damages. Listening theory is not mastered by students in turn it is difficult for them to formulate about what and how they must master listening. Teaching English in Thailand is intended to develop student communicative competence.

The target in teaching and learning English in Thailand is to enable the learners to apply the mastery of English skills to communicate orally and in writing at intermediate level. Teaching students in Thailand is focused on the ability to communicate with it. It means that the communication competence of the students are the emphasize. Students faced with certain situation, where they express what they think and what they must do. We can use listening work in the classroom as one way to help focus on language systems. This activity provides listening practice by supplying a script for verbalizing along with the listening material.

Nowadays, listening comprehension has improved. So many new technologies have supported for the listening skill that expected to improve listening comprehension skill. But in

the fact, the students are still unfamiliar with the listening subject itself. Students are unable to catch the sentences even the words. It is because they are unable to listen to the English text well in the listening class. Somehow, they can listen to the sentence, but they fail to write what they hear. Some of them even fail to find the main idea, supporting ideas or the details from the recording (Skripsi, 2018:6).

Sometimes, the contents of the materials that the teachers made are not always familiar with the students. Some of them are not relevant to the students. The students may lack the background knowledge about foreign countries and cultures. So sometimes they cannot understand the material or they may misunderstand the meaning of it. There are some media can be used in listening learning process, such as audio media, audio-visual media, etc. example for audio media is radio, music, podcasts, and so on. While the example of audio-visual is video, film/movie, television, etc.

Media such as a podcasts has significant roles to motivate the students in listening learning process and to make the atmosphere in learning process more interesting. Podcasts are particularly appropriate for the practice of extensive listening, for the purpose of motivating students to listen. Podcasts offers a good chance for the students and the teachers. Nowadays using podcasts are easier. There are many kinds of podcasts' application on mobile. There are many different mobile applications available for people to use to subscribe and to listen to podcasts. Many of these applications allow users to download podcasts or to stream them on demand as an alternative to downloading. This can fulfill the needs of different learners. Those can be downloaded by learners themselves. Students are expected to be more interested in having listening class by using podcast. They are also expected to have more opportunities to practice listening, which in turn will make them attend the listening class.

1. Understanding listening

According to Osada (2004:53-54), although listening is now recognized as critical dimension in language learning, it still remains one of the least understood processes. Morley (2001:69), Narrates that during the 1980s special attention to listening was incorporated into new instructional framework, that is, functional language and communicative approaches. As the author goes on, throughout the 1990s, attention to listening in language teaching has increased dramatically.

Many studies, previously discussed, demonstrate that listening and speaking were considered to be the most important skills for improving communicative ability in English Language. However, this does not mean that writing and reading are not relevant in the communication field, since in the integrated skills we have to look at them as one. Speaking and listening are closely interlinked in conversations. Listening takes part in our everyday life. We spend most of time listening, either to authentic sources, like listening to TV or radio broadcasting or listening to our friends and other people. Scrivener (2005:171) advocates that whenever we listen in everyday life, we may need to listen to:



- Get a general overview of the main story or message of a conversation;
- Catch specific details such as names, numbers, addresses, expressions, etc.

Comprehensive listening does not necessarily mean to understand every word or sound we listen. Gower (1995:88) totally agrees with Scrivener by saying that “often in a [listening] skill lesson it is not essential that learners understand every word of listening material”.

In listening activities teachers should focus on global or general understanding before moving to detailed or deep understanding. If the listening material is a recorded text, for instance, it is important build up knowledge of text gradually, starting with what students already master in order to deal with the new one; that is, beginning with the easy aspects and then move to the more difficult.

Skinner in behaviorist perspective defends that children learn by imitating people who surround them, the result of their imitation is reflected on reproduced words uttered by them. In fact, people develop their speaking skills from listening inputs. In other words, Children utter what they hear or listen to their parents, relatives and other people surrounding them. So, teacher should place authentic listening activities in the center of their teaching task as a way to boost students’ listening skills.

In the classroom listening context teachers need to follow some procedures to help students succeed. Gower et.al (1995:88) argued that classroom listening should be used for the following purposes:

- to develop global listening;
- to develop intensive listening skills and;
- to introduce a new vocabulary set in a natural context.

When teaching listening, all our attention should be in developing student’s listening skills in a way to boost up their language development.

2. Defining listening

The concept of listening is quite broad. Rost (2002:157) regards listening as a complex affective, cognitive, and behavioral processes, whereas Buck (2000:147) advocates that listening is considered as an art, which involves awareness, reception and perception. Scholars in linguistics and methodology put both listening and reading in a group of perceptive language skills.

Listening is now considered as active skills that involves many processes. Nowadays, listening comprehension is generally acknowledged as an important facet of language learning; nevertheless, much work remains to be done, both in theory and practice.

3. Types of listening

The literature provides us almost an endless list of kinds of listening. Below, there are some types of listening considered to be relevant among others.

3.1 Discriminative listening

Discriminative listening Pica and Doughty (1987:169-170) referred as the most basic type of listening, whereby the difference between different sounds is identified. If you cannot hear differences, then you cannot make sense of the meaning that is expressed by such differences. We learn to discriminate between sounds within our own language early, and later are unable to discriminate between the phonemes of other languages. This is one reason why a person from one country finds it difficult to speak another language perfectly, as they are unable to distinguish the subtle sounds that are required in that language.

Likewise, a person who cannot hear the subtleties of emotional variation in another person's voice will be less likely to be able to discern the emotions the other person is experiencing. Listening is a visual as well as auditory act, as we communicate much through body language.

3.2 Critical or evaluative listening

Lucas (1998:58), says that this type of listening is used to evaluate a message for purposes of accepting or rejecting it, as when we listen to the sales pitch of a used-car dealer, the campaign speech of a political candidate, or the closing arguments of an attorney in a jury trial.

As we know, in evaluative listening, or critical listening, we make judgments about what the other person is saying. We seek to assess the truth of what is being said. We also judge what they say against our values, assessing them as good or bad, worthy or unworthy.

Evaluative listening is particularly pertinent when the other person is trying to persuade us, perhaps to change our behavior and maybe even to change our beliefs. Within this, we also discriminate between subtleties of language and comprehend the inner meaning of what is said. Typically, also we weigh up the pros and cons of an argument, determining whether it makes sense logically as well as whether it is helpful to us. Evaluative listening is also called critical, judgmental or interpretive listening.

3.3 Appreciative listening

According to Lucas (op.cit:57), appreciative listening is when we listen for pleasure or enjoyment, as when we listen to music, to a comedy, or to an entertaining speech or when we listen to a radio or watch TV. Appreciative listening drives us to seek certain information which will enjoy us with things which help meet our needs and goals. It is in here where the listener gains pleasure/satisfaction from listening to a certain type of music for example. Appreciative sources might also include particular charismatic speakers or entertainers. These are personal preferences and may have been shaped through our experiences and expectations. We use appreciative listening when we are listening to good music, poetry or maybe even the stirring words of a great leader.

3.4 Empathic listening



According to Lucas (*ibid*), empathic listening provides emotional support for the speaker, as when a psychiatrist listens to a patient or when we lend a sympathetic ear to a friend in distress.

In fact, when we listen empathetically, we go beyond sympathy to seek a truer understanding how others are feeling. This requires excellent discrimination and close attention to the nuances of emotional signals. When we are being truly empathetic, we actually feel what they are feeling.

In this sort of listening, the listener tends to listen rather than talk. Their nonverbal behavior indicates that the listener is attending to what is being said. The emphasis is on understanding the speaker's feelings and being supportive and patient; we also need to demonstrate our empathy in our demeanor towards them, asking sensitively and in a way that encourages self-disclosure.

3.5 False listening

Rost (1990:147-149) argues that false listening occurs where a person is pretending to listen but is not hearing anything that is being said. They may nod, smile and grunt in all the right places, but do not actually take in anything that is said. This is a skill that may be finely honed by people who do a lot of inconsequential listening, such as politicians and royalty. Although, their goal with their audience is to make a good impression in very short space of time before they move on, but they never wish to talk to that person again. It is also something practiced by couples, particularly where one side does most of the talking.

3.6 Selective listening

Lynch (1995:87), encapsulates that selective or partial listening involves listening for particular things and ignoring others. Partial listening is what most of us do most of the time, we listen to the other person with the best of intent and then become distracted, either by stray thoughts or by something that the other person has said.

We consequently dip inside our own heads for a short while as we figure out what they really mean or formulate a question for them, before coming back into the room and starting to listen again.

This can be problematic when the other person has moved on and we are unable to pick up the threads of what is being said. We thus easily can fall into false listening, at least for a short while. This can be embarrassing, of course, if they suddenly ask our opinion. In a situation like that, we should admit that we had lost the thread of the conversation and asking them to repeat what was said.

4. Process of listening

The process of listening occurs in five stages. They are hearing, understanding, remembering, evaluating, and responding.



HEARING – It is response caused by stimulating the sensory

referred to the sound waves

receptors of the ear; it is physical response; hearing is perception of sound waves; you must hear to listen, but you need not listen to hear (perception necessary for listening depends on attention). Brain screens stimuli and permits only a select few to come into focus- this selective perception is known as attention, an important requirement for effective listening.

UNDERSTANDING- This step helps to understand symbols we have seen and heard, we must analyze the meaning of the stimuli we have perceived; symbolic stimuli are not only words but also sounds like applause... and sights like blue uniform...that have symbolic meanings as well; the meanings attached to these symbols are a function of our past associations and of the context in which the symbols occur. For successful interpersonal communication, the listener must understand the intended meaning and the context assumed by the sender.

REMEMBERING- Remembering is important listening process because it means that an individual has not only received and interpreted a message but has also added it to the mind's storage bank. In Listening our attention is selective, so too is our memory- what is remembered may be quite different from what was originally seen or heard.

EVALUATING- Only active listeners participate at this stage in Listening. At this point the active listener weighs evidence, sorts fact from opinion, and determines the presence or absence of bias or prejudice in a message; the effective listener makes sure that he or she doesn't begin this activity too soon ; beginning this stage of the process before a message is completed requires that we no longer hear and attend to the incoming message-as a result, the listening process ceases.

RESPONDING- This stage requires that the receiver complete the process through verbal and/or nonverbal feedback; because the speaker has no other way to determine if a message has been received, this stage becomes the only overt means by which the sender may determine the degree of success in transmitting the message.

5. Strategies of Listening



Listening strategies are techniques or activities that contribute directly to the comprehension and recall of listening input. Listening strategies can be classified by how the listener processes the input.

Top-down strategies are listener based. The listener taps into background knowledge of the topic, the situation or context, the type of text, and the language. This background knowledge activates a set of expectations that help the listener to interpret what is heard and anticipate what will come next. Top-down strategies include

- listening for the main idea
- predicting
- drawing inferences
- summarizing

Bottom-up strategies are text based; the listener relies on the language in the message, that is, the combination of sounds, words, and grammar that creates meaning. Bottom-up strategies include

- listening for specific details
- recognizing cognates
- recognizing word-order patterns

Three Basic modes of Listening

Active or Reflective Listening

It is the single most useful and important listening skill. In active listening , the listener is genuinely interested in understanding what the other person is thinking, feeling, wanting or what the message means. The person is active in checking his understanding before he respond with his new message. The listener restate or paraphrase our understanding of the message and reflect it back to the sender for verification. This verification or feedback process is what distinguishes active listening and makes it effective.

Essentials of Active Listening

- 1) Intensity
- 2) Empathy
- 3) Acceptance
- 4) Recognizing responsibility for completeness

Passive or Attentive Listening

The listener is genuinely interested in hearing and understanding the other person's point of view. He will be attentive and will passively listen. The Listener assume that what he heard and understand is correct but stay passive and do not verify it.

Competitive or Combative Listening

It happens when the Listener is more interested in promoting his own point of view than in understanding or exploring someone else's view. He either listen for openings to take the floor, or for flaws or weak points.

Importance of Listening Skill

Good listening skills make workers more productive. The ability to listen carefully will allow a person to:

- understand assignments in better way and find and what is expected from him.
- build rapport with co-workers, bosses, and clients;
- show support;
- work better in a team-based environment;
- resolve problems with customers, co-workers, and bosses;
- answer questions
- find underlying meanings in what others say.

Ways to improve Listening skill

Hearing and Listening are two different activity. Hearing is passive whereas Listening is active. Listening is a psychological process. It can therefore be improved by regular practice. Listening is a very helpful skill. Active listening is really an extension of the Golden Rule. Here are some of the tips which can help the person to improve his Listening skill:

1. Face the speaker. Sit up straight or lean forward slightly to show your attentiveness through body language.
2. Maintain eye contact, to the degree that you all remain comfortable.
3. Minimize external distractions. Turn off the TV. Put down your book or magazine, and ask the speaker and other listeners to do the same.
4. Respond appropriately to show that you understand. Murmur (“uh-huh” and “um-hmm”) and nod. Raise your eyebrows. Say words such as “Really,” “Interesting,” as well as more direct prompts: “What did you do then?” and “What did she say?”
5. Focus solely on what the speaker is saying. Try not to think about what you are going to say next. The conversation will follow a logical flow after the speaker makes her point.
6. Minimize internal distractions. If your own thoughts keep horning in, simply let them go and continuously re-focus your attention on the speaker, much as you would during meditation.
7. Keep an open mind. Wait until the speaker is finished before deciding that you disagree. Try not to make assumptions about what the speaker is thinking.
8. Avoid letting the speaker know how you handled a similar situation. Unless they specifically ask for advice, assume they just need to talk it out.
9. Even if the speaker is launching a complaint against you, wait until they finish to defend yourself. The speaker will feel as though their point had been made. They won’t feel the need to repeat it, and you’ll know the whole argument before you respond. Research shows that, on average, we can hear four times faster than we can talk, so we have the ability to sort ideas as they come in...and be ready for more.



10. Engage yourself. Ask questions for clarification, but, once again, wait until the speaker has finished. That way, you won't interrupt their train of thought. After you ask questions, paraphrase their point to make sure you didn't misunderstand. Start with: "So you're saying..."

Barriers to Listening

Listening is not easy and there are a number of obstacles that stand in the way of effective listening, both within outside the workplace. These barriers may be categorized as follows.

1. Physiological Barriers: - some people may have genuine hearing problems or deficiencies that prevent them from listening properly. It can be treated. Some people may have problem in processing information or retaining information in the memory.

2. Physical Barriers: - These referred to distraction in the environment such as the sound of an air conditioner , cigarette smoke, or an overheated room. It can interfere the Listening process. They could also be in the form of information overload. For example, if you are in meeting with your manager and the phone rings and your mobile beeps at the same time to let know that you have the message. It is very hard to listen carefully to what is being said.

3. Attitudinal Barriers :- preoccupation with personal or work related problems can make it difficult to focus one's attention completely on what speaker is saying, even what is being said is of very importance.

Another common attitudinal barrier is egocentrism, or the belief that the person have more knowledgeable than the speaker, or that there is nothing new to learn from the speaker's ideas. People with this kind of close minded attitude are very poor listeners.

4. Wrong Assumptions :- The success of communication depends on the both the sender and receiver. It is wrong to assume that communication is the sole responsibility of the sender or the speaker and that listeners have no role to play. Such an assumption can be big barrier to listening. For example, a brilliant speech or presentation, however well delivered, is wasted if the receiver is not listening at the other end. Listeners have as much responsibility as speakers to make the communication successful. The process should be made successful by paying attention seeking clarifications and giving feedback.

5. Cultural Barriers :- Accents can be barriers to listening, since they interfere with the ability to understand the meaning of words that are pronounced differently. The problem of different accents arises not only between cultures, but also within a culture. For example, in a country like India where there is enormous cultural diversity, accents may differ even between regions states.

6. Gender Barriers :- communication research has shown that gender can be barrier to listening. Studies have revealed that men and women listen very differently and for different purposes. Women are more likely to listen for the emotion behind a speaker's words, when men listen more for the facts and the content.

7. Lack of Training :- Listening is not an inborn skill. People are not born good listeners. It is developed through practice and training. Lack of training in listening skills is an important barrier.

8. Bad Listening Habits :- Most people are very average listeners who have developed poor, listening habits that are hard to said and that act as barriers to listening. For example, some people have the habits of “faking” attention, or trying to look like a listeners, in order to impress the speaker and to assure him that they are paying attention. Others may tend to listen to each and every fact and, as a result, miss out the main point.

Benefits of Effective Listening Skills

Learning the skill of effective listening benefits personal growth and development in the following ways:

Effective Communication – Clear and concise transmission of information is an important component of effective human interaction. Though the onus is often placed on presenting clear and concise written or spoken directions, the listener also bears a responsibility to hear and understand messages.

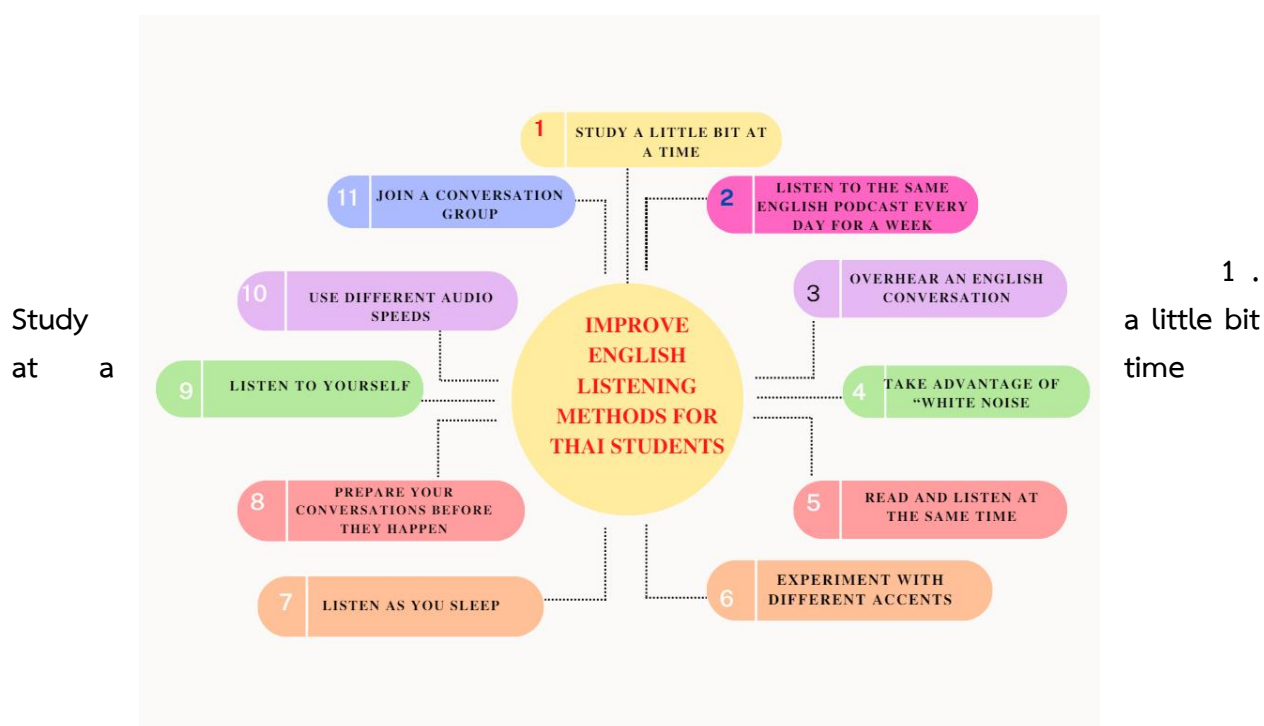
Fewer Misunderstandings – Regardless of the clarity of written or spoken messages, the effective listener can prevent misunderstandings and salvage what otherwise might be a miscommunication by practicing active listening skills.

Improved Relationships – Relationships are damaged by misunderstandings that can lead to unsatisfactory business transactions as well as hurt feelings in personal relationships. Excellent listening practices tell others that they are important, special, and what they have to say is valued. That is very attractive and contributes to strong relationships.

Personal Growth – A person learns and grows by listening and understanding other viewpoints, differing ideas, and exploring conflicting viewpoints. Learning the skill of active and effective listening not only adds a tool to the personal development portfolio, but equips you to continue growing with tools for exploring new ideas.

Knowledge from the Study

It's very important to be in the right setting when learning any part of English. With listening, it's even more important, because listening is a skill that requires your careful attention. For those of you who prefer to study English alone, here are some tips to get better at listening.



Only have a few minutes per day to study? Perfect. Believe it or not, that's even better than having a lot of time to study. I recently discovered that my favorite learning method, studying around 15-20 minutes a day instead of a few hours in one sitting, actually has a name: microlearning. Simply speaking, microlearning is dividing your task into very small tasks that can be done in about five minutes. For example, imagine that you're trying to study the present perfect. You can micro learn it by dividing it into: 1 . Affirmative sentences; 2 . Negative sentences; 3. Questions; 4. Use; 5. Words that trigger the present perfect.

This is just an example. You can divide your task the way you want, always trying to remember that every individual task should last five minutes at most. There are a lot of scientific studies that prove that learning 15 to 30 minutes every day is much better than trying to memorize hundreds of new words and grammar rules in one day. I know practicing a little bit every day works because I do it myself. Everybody has 15 or 20 minutes every day to read about a new tense, listen to a podcast or watch an episode of a cool series.

Try to introduce microlearning in your English-learning daily routine. The greatest thing about microlearning is that you only need five minutes to finish a task, so you can do one in the morning, one in the afternoon and one in the evening—or all three when you have a 20-minute break... You choose how you want to do it, just do it every single day!

2. Listen to the same English podcast every day for a week

Find a podcast that you find interesting or entertaining and choose one episode. Listen to that episode every day for a week—while you’re driving, riding the bus, washing dishes, etc. Pick out words or phrases that are difficult to understand and look them up on the first and second days. Don’t forget to hit “pause” and listen again. After a couple of days, you should be able to listen out for these words and understand them. It may also help to memorize parts of the podcast and practice speaking them out loud. Listen for the differences between yourself and the speaker.

By the last day, you’ll find that you can understand much more than on the first day. As your ear adjusts to hearing this English podcast episode, it’ll be easier to listen to new audio in English.

3. Overhear an English conversation

If you’re living somewhere where English is spoken, take an afternoon to hunt for an English conversation. When you start to hear English, slow down and listen. At first, you won’t know what they’re talking about since you’ll probably start listening in the middle of the conversation. This will make it even more challenging to understand, but also more fun.

Hearing English in use is one of the best ways to learn the language. It’ll help you build your understanding of how to actually use vocabulary words, grammar concepts and even commonly used slang. Listen for any new words you may not know, and also try to see if you can catch what the conversation is about. You can search for English conversation on a bus, in a cafe or at a park.

4. Take advantage of “white noise

White noise can mean different things, and its dictionary definition is quite complicated even for native speakers. When it comes to “normal people,” I would define white noise as some kind of sound, normally continuous, that goes on in the background while you do something else. If you switch on the radio and listen to music while you do the dishes, that music is your white noise. If I’m listening to a podcast while I water my plants, that podcast is my white noise. We’re practicing passive listening when we use English white noise. One of the things about white noise is that we normally don’t have to pay attention to it. The music you’re listening or the TV “talking to itself” while you clean the bathroom is just there. You don’t have to be listening to and focusing on them (active listening). When we learn a language, white noise can be used to our advantage.

Play a podcast, an audiobook or an English series in the background while you clean your flat or iron your clothes (or do any other chore). Don’t pay special attention to it, just let it



play and go on with your activities. You might think that you're not learning anything if you're not paying attention, but the truth is that your brain is registering everything that's happening in the background, and that white noise that you think is only filling the silence is actually making your brain work.

5. Read and listen at the same time

Another way to improve your listening skills is to use two sources of information at the same time. This simply means that you should be not only listening, but also getting your English from another place at the same time. The easiest way to do this is by watching an English video with English subtitles. This way, you'll be listening to and reading the words, which will make it easier to understand everything and will help you to remember more. Another way of getting English from two sources is with podcasts. Many podcasts include a transcript of what the speaker's saying, so once again you get to listen to and read the same information at the same time.

You can also print the transcript before listening. That way, when you find something interesting, you can stop the audio and make notes on the printed transcript. Finally, audiobooks are another easy way of getting English from two sources at the same time. Most books exist in their printed or e-book versions before they are made into audiobooks. There are also many internet sites that offer (mostly) free audiobooks along with their digital text. You only have to press play and start listening and reading at the same time.

6. Experiment with different accents

Are American movies easier for you to understand than British movies? Or maybe the opposite is true?

You might have trouble understanding some English accents the first few times you listen to them. This is normal! Even native English speakers can have trouble understanding different English accents. But all English accents are beautiful, and you can understand them all if you just keep on listening. Remember that practice makes perfect. If you think a specific English accent is more difficult to understand for you, all you have to do is keep on practicing your listening skills with audio from that accent.

For example, if American English is challenging for you, try watching American series or listening to American podcasts or the news for a month. At the end of these 30 days, your ears will have gotten used to the accent, and it'll be much easier for you to understand.

You can get some additional help with this, by using the subtitled immersion program, FluentU. The program teaches with authentic videos, which are videos made by and for native speakers—the kind that English speakers actually watch.

That means that the content library is full of useful videos like movie trailers for hits like "To All the Boys I've Loved Before," clips from TV shows like "Friends," commercials, news segments, music videos and many others. And since it can be difficult to understand real

English speech, FluentU let you filter all the videos by skill level, topic and format to make it easier to find something fitting for your study needs.

You can turn off the subtitles to really test your ears. Or, turn the subtitles back on and click or move your mouse over any of the words to check their definition and usage. Every word comes with an in-context definition, image, audio and multiple example sentences, which you can view by clicking on it in the subtitles of a video. From here, you can even see how it's used in other videos across the site. When you finish watching the video, test yourself using the quiz that follows.

You can take similar quizzes to study the words you've saved as flashcards. These exercises are personalized to your level of understanding of each word, and let you type or speak your answer to some questions for additional practice.

FluentU will save your learning progress across the browser version, the iOS app and the Android app, so you don't have to stop learning when you're on the go.

At the end of the day, you need to practice the accent (or accents) that's difficult for you. Variety makes life more fun, and being able to understand English speakers from all around the world is simply amazing.

Pro tip: You probably already know some American and British YouTube channels. But if you want to practice your Australian English listening, watch the YouTube channel "How to Cook That." You'll be able to listen to real Australian English and learn a little about the science of cooking through failed cake remakes and debunking (proving something is false) those ever-popular 5-Minute Crafts videos.

7. Listen as you sleep

No, I haven't gone crazy. It's actually possible to practice your English while you sleep. This kind of practice is perfect if you want to learn new words or improve your pronunciation. However, you have to choose your videos/audios properly. You don't want to wake up and realize you have been learning Chinese instead of English!

If you want to give this a try, you'll find lots of posts, articles and studies that talk about this topic. They normally focus on learning vocabulary, but you can use these resources to improve your listening skills, as well. At the end of the day, you'll be learning how to correctly pronounce those words and sentences, so you'll also be practicing your listening comprehension and pronunciation skills. Yes, in your sleep.

8. Prepare your conversations before they happen

Conversations are all about speaking, but this is a post about listening skills, so why am I including this here? Easy, every conversation, even those with ourselves, include a speaker and a listener. Now, I know this trick works because I use it myself. Let me give you a little bit of background. I was born in Spain and lived there for 23 years of my life. My native language is Spanish. One day, I got a scholarship and I had to move to Poland. Seven days later! I was terrified because I didn't know a single word of Polish. How was I supposed to go to the doctor



without speaking the language? Or buy a train ticket? After panicking for a little bit, I realized that I had to learn quickly. But instead of studying vocabulary lists, I needed words that would help me get through everyday life. So, I started preparing for conversations before they happened.

If I had to go to the pharmacy, for example, I would get ready by thinking about the conversation I was going to have. I thought about the questions I might be asked and how I could respond to them. I learned only the words that I was going to need to know. This conversation with myself would go on and on until I was sure I had an answer for every possible question, and I could recognize some important words they could use. Sometimes the process was short, others it took much more time, but this allowed me to go to the pharmacy, the shop around the corner and even to the doctor with confidence.

I was sure I wouldn't understand everything, but I was prepared for many situations, and during the real conversations I could normally understand pretty well what they were telling me.

It's a method I highly recommend—if you know what to expect, you'll be listening for it and hear the words clearer than if you have no idea what the other person might say to you. And since you'll know the basics, your brain will start filling in the gaps about the words you don't know. With a little bit of practice, you'll be able to understand almost everything!

9. Listen to yourself

This way of improving your listening skills is related to the previous one. If you're having a conversation with yourself in front of the mirror or in your head, you're already listening to yourself. Use your own voice to practice your English listening skills!

You may think I am crazy, but I talk to myself in the languages I study when I have a shower or go for a run. I create imaginary conversations, ask myself questions and give myself answers pretending to be another person. Sometimes I even change my voice or my accent!

Listening to yourself is an amazing way of improving your listening skills. If you've been listening to English for some time now, you already know how it sounds. You've probably learned a lot of words that you can use in your imaginary conversations, and if you have to use a word you don't know in English or don't know how to pronounce, you can always use Forvo to help you with that.

I like watching shows in Hungarian and then I try to imitate the accent in front of the mirror. I look at the actors' faces and listen to the same words and phrases many times until I am sure I have the perfect pronunciation. Then I speak to myself and I try to use those words. Try it with English-language shows!

In the beginning, you might not think that you're practicing your listening skills, but you'll be surprised at how much you improve your listening comprehension with this crazy tip.

10. Use different audio speeds

I also use this technique when I learn a new language.

It's as simple as it sounds. Pick a video on YouTube or play it in any platform or program that allows you to change the speed of the audio/video.

The first time you watch, do it at normal speed. You'll probably miss information, but that happens to all of us.

During your second listening, choose the 0.75 speed. This will play the same video at 75% speed. It'll go slower, and you'll be able to understand many more words or expressions than the first time.

You can even go slower if you want, but I don't recommend going below 60% or else the voice will get too distorted and the words will probably no longer be words but a series of sounds (think of how a very, very drunk person talks).

When you think you're ready for a challenge, do the opposite. Choose 1.25 or even 1.5 and watch the video at a faster speed. Challenge yourself and go up in speed as your listening skills get better. You will be amazed at the results! (Don't go over 1.75—that's a challenge even for native speakers!)

11. Join a conversation group

After all this practice alone, you're ready to start actually using your new listening skills. But how?

One great way is to join a group of English learners who host a conversation table. Conversation groups usually meet regularly, but it's not a class. You don't have to come every week; the purpose is simply to converse (talk) in English. Meetup is a great place to look for English conversation groups. If you can't find a group near you, start your own!

This will be a great way to listen to a variety of English accents and voices. If you're nervous about speaking English, remind yourself that you're going to listen—and this is totally okay. You can even tell the other speakers this if you want to, if you think it'll be weird to sit quietly. You could say something like:

Hi, I'm Rebecca. I'm going to focus on listening tonight, so I might not say very much!

Practice that line before you go, and then after you say it, you can concentrate (focus) on listening! And besides listening and speaking practice, joining a conversation group can also be a fantastic way to make new friends.

Conclusion

Practice makes you perfect to improve your listening skills. Therefore, you know what to learn based on your learning. You can use the movie to help you more to improve your listening or you can turn off the subtitle to make you improve your listening. You can learn to listen the podcast to make perfect. Hopefully this paper will help all of you to improve your skills like listening.



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