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## A Study on Listening Skill Appropriation in English Language Teaching in Azerbaijan

### Abstract

This paper explores the development of English listening skills among students in Azerbaijan, highlighting the transition from grammar-focused teaching to the integration of listening and writing activities. It identifies the persistent challenges Azerbaijani students face, particularly due to phonetic differences between English and Azerbaijani. Emphasis is placed on the use of intensive and extensive listening methodologies to enhance comprehension, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Intensive listening focuses on detailed analysis through short materials, while extensive listening encourages exposure to longer texts for general understanding. The paper also discusses didactic approaches and emphasizes the importance of regular practice, contextual learning, and maintaining motivation through personalized goals. It distinguishes between top-down and bottom-up listening strategies and underlines the importance of interactive processing for effective comprehension. Furthermore, it addresses environmental and instructional factors that affect listening development, including classroom settings and the language of instruction. Overall, the study advocates for strategic, consistent practice and teacher-student interaction in English to foster lasting listening proficiency.

**Keywords:** teacher, method, student, listening, skill

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## Azərbaycanda ingilis dilinin tədrisində dinləmə bacarıqlarının mənimşənilməsi üzrə tədqiqat

### Xülasə

Bu məqalə Azərbaycanda tələbələr arasında ingilis dilində dinləmə bacarıqlarının inkişafını tədqiq edir, qrammatika yönümlü tədrisdən dinləmə və yazı fəaliyyətlərinin integrasiyasına keçidi

vurğulayır. O, azərbaycanlı tələbələrin xüsusilə ingilis və Azərbaycan dilləri arasında fonetik fərqlərə görə üzləşdiyi davamlı problemləri müəyyən edir. Anlama, lügət və tələffüzü artırmaq üçün intensiv və geniş dinləmə metodologiyalarından istifadəyə diqqət yetirilir. İntensiv dinləmə qısa materiallar vasitəsilə təfərrüatlı təhlilə diqqət yetirir, geniş dinləmə isə ümumi anlayış üçün daha uzun mətnlərə məruz qalmayı təşviq edir. Məqalədə, həmçinin, didaktik yanaşmalar müzakirə edilir və fərdiləşdirilmiş məqsədlər vasitəsilə müntəzəm təcrübənin, kontekstual öyrənmənin və motivasiyanın saxlanması vacibliyi vurğulanır. O, yuxarıdan aşağıya və aşağıdan yuxarı dinləmə strategiyalarını fərqləndirir və effektiv başa düşmək üçün interaktiv emalın vacibliyini vurğulayır. Bundan əlavə, o, dinləmənin inkişafına təsir edən ətraf mühit və tədris amillərini, o cümlədən sinif şəraiti və tədris dilini əhatə edir. Ümumilikdə, tədqiqat davamlı dinləmə bacarığını inkişaf etdirmək üçün ingilis dilində strateji, ardıcıl təcrübə və müəllim-şagird qarşılıqlı əlaqəsini müdafiə edir.

*Açar sözlər: müəllim, metod, şagird, dinləmə, bacarıq*

## Introduction

English language teaching has developed incredibly compared to previous years in Azerbaijan. Previously, teachers only taught grammar-based lessons, but now they are already using listening and writing materials in the education system. This is commendable, because it plays a major role in students' real communication and greater mastery of the language. The fact that listening texts are reflected in textbooks even from primary school is a clear example of this. Listening to each listening text is accessible, and a teacher who uses all modern devices appropriately and successfully in the lesson makes this teaching high-quality. This should be noted because using listening aids in teaching English will contribute to students laying the foundation for this habit and learning English more deeply in the coming years.

### Research

Challenges of Azerbaijani students during listening. In Azerbaijan, preparation for the English language exam is more serious and comprehensive than in previous years, because in previous years, only grammar and reading tasks were considered. However, currently there is an exam system that also tests speaking skills. One nuance that I have observed is that despite the fact that all language skills have been practiced for many years, there are still a number of problems in understanding listening texts for students. Understanding listening texts in English is especially difficult for Azerbaijani students. Because the sounds processed between the teeth in English are not in Azerbaijani, their pronunciation is also incomprehensible to students, which are the sounds θ and ð. Thus, when words consisting of these sounds are pronounced, confusion arises and the student has difficulty finding the correct answer. For example, a student understands the pronunciation of the word "those" as "dose", and the pronunciation of the word "three" as "tree". In this regard, understanding listening texts in English requires a lot of effort and attention.

Methodology. Listening texts involve comprehension, analysis, and use. The reason why most students still have many problems when listening is their lack of awareness of intensive and extensive listening. This is one of the techniques that every English teacher should apply during listening. So what does intensive and extensive listening mean and how is it used?

Intensive listening – During internal listening, students are listened to short videos or audios. Before this, the teacher discusses the topic with the students. For example, if the topic is about sports, the vocabulary is first reminded and the students are asked what information they can hear. After listening, the students write down the words they understand. The second time, they need to listen for more detailed information (Yıldırım, Yıldırım, 2016). If necessary, they can also listen again for pronunciation. They can even improve their pronunciation by repeating or imitating those words or phrases after speaking with the "shadowing" method. For this type of listening, five-minute videos on the YouTube channels are usually enough for students and teachers to analyze. It should be noted that internal listening can be done not only with the help of a teacher, but also by students during extracurricular activities. This listening method has a very positive effect on student language

learning. They can listen until they fully understand the text, learn new words and, in addition, improve their pronunciation.

Extensive listening – Unlike intensive listening, the purpose of extensive listening texts is to expand listening skills by doing longer listening. Of course, the longer the listening, the better. In this case, videos of at least twenty minutes are selected, and the length of the videos can be three hours. Of course, it is impossible to listen to such long videos with the teacher in the classroom during class. Therefore, the student should do it outside the classroom environment to be effective. Unlike intensive listening, extensive listening is listened to once, but this does not mean that it should not be listened to again. If there is information that is not understood or is not clear, it can be returned to for this (Harmer, 1991). The purpose of extensive listening text is for the student to understand the context, to note new unknown words. During intensive listening, a favorite topic can be chosen, but during extensive listening, it is necessary to listen to all possible topics so that it is possible to understand someone speaking on any topic. Extensive listening is like being in an environment with English speakers in a foreign country. For this, listening to extensive listening texts is very important. However, the goal in this case is not to expect 100% understanding of the text, but to understand the meaning of the listening text. Some students prefer intensive listening, thinking that at that time they can analyze better with the help of the teacher (Natsir, Sanjay, 2014). Another group of students is in favor of extensive listening, because they believe that intensive listening can only be done with the teacher. As it turns out, both ideas are wrong. It is important to benefit from both listening for better learning.

In higher education institutions of Azerbaijan, students' listening skills are usually strengthened through intensive listening. After taking classes in the English language teaching specialty with intensive and extensive listening methods, it became clear that it is impossible to use the extensive listening method in a classroom setting, because students' attention is distracted and it is not effective to do so due to other voices. For this reason, I preferred to use only the intensive method to improve listening skills.

**Didactic Approaches.** Listening comprehension requires more concentration and quick comprehension. There are many factors that need to be paid special attention to when listening. These include context, facial expressions and body language, which are all important in helping listeners understand what is being conveyed by speakers. Purposeful, focused practice can really help you expand your ability to understand key contexts and help you learn new words and become familiar with grammatical structures and accents. For example, listen to a 2-minute segment of a podcast - then check your understanding and continue listening for the next 2 minutes, etc. Try this two or three times and then relax and listen to the rest of the text (Cambridge University Press).

Since the listening process is learned by students over time, if not practiced for a while, it can quickly become forgotten. This is the result of my observation with different groups last week that after using a five-minute video material in the first lesson after returning from vacation, most of the students had difficulty doing the tasks. It is clear from this that no matter how well we develop listening skills among students, after a certain time this will be forgotten. Therefore, it is necessary to listen to listening texts regularly and solve the tasks given. For this, even during the vacation, students should be provided with short and interesting videos, not long texts, so that the skills taught during the lesson are not forgotten. Listening and comprehension are very important. Students usually start developing their listening skills by watching movies directly (Renukadevi, 2014). At this point, it is natural to despair. Because they do not understand unknown words and expressions and, as a result, they hesitate, thinking that learning a language is difficult. However, watching movies may be one of the last methods for listening. First, every language learner should set a goal for himself (Underwood, 1989). Why am I learning a language? Why is listening important? You should look for answers to these questions. At the next stage, a "self-study plan" should be prepared and a special time should be set for listening every day. The answers to the listening tests should be compared each time. If the result is on an increasing scale, then it is considered a positive situation. Each student should find a conversation partner for himself, because no matter how convenient it is to use podcasts, a partner is a must for the creation of natural situations. In addition, using sources correctly helps to

achieve high results in a short time (Aryanti, 2018). Finally, watching movies is one of the fun ways to help understand listening in any context and is the most used method by most students.

Success in listening skills depends not only on the teacher and the student, but also on the place where the lesson is held. As is known, English is taught not only in the faculty of foreign languages, but also in other faculties as a non-specialized subject. For example, sometimes English lessons are held alongside music classes. In this case, the lesson in another room interferes with the listening texts being played in a foreign language (How to improve listening skills in English: 2024). Therefore, special attention should be paid to the conditions of English language lessons, otherwise the lessons will not be effective.

Additional strategies. Listening strategies can be broadly classified as top-down and bottom-up strategies:

Top-down strategies are listener-based; the listener relies on background knowledge about the topic, the listening context, the type of text, and the language, and help the listener interpret the ideas he or she hears. The following stages are analyzed for top-down strategies:

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

On the other hand, bottom-up strategies are text-based, where listeners use linguistic knowledge to understand the information. Here, the listener relies on the language in the message, that is, the combination of sounds, words, and grammar, to arrive at the final message. Bottom-up strategies are carried out in the following manner:

- focusing on specific details while listening
- recognizing word order patterns.

However, listening comprehension is not limited to either top-down or bottom-up processing, but should be an interactive, interpretive process in which listeners apply both their prior knowledge and linguistic knowledge to understand messages. According to interactive processing, top-down and bottom-up listening processes are combined to enhance listening comprehension. The application of background knowledge, contextual information, and linguistic information facilitates comprehension and interpretation. When the content of the material is familiar to the listener, he or she uses his or her knowledge to make predictions that are supported by new input (*Strategies for teaching listening*, n.d.). When the content of the listening text is unfamiliar to the listener, he or she can only use his or her linguistic knowledge, especially lexical and syntactic knowledge, to understand the information.

It is worth noting another nuance, which is that no matter how much students listen to the listening materials, if the teacher speaks to them only in their native language in the classroom, gives assignments, communicates and explains the new lesson, any results can be achieved later. The teacher achieves any results not only by using listening texts, but also by constantly communicating with the students in a foreign language. For this, the explanation of any new word should be given by the teacher in English, and students can both analyze the word by thinking about it and understand it by listening to what the teacher says in a natural context.

## Conclusion

To sum up, listening skill is a challenging skill to be comprehended for the students in Azerbaijan, however, teachers are able to teach it using various methods and strategies that are aforementioned. Acquiring listening will be understandable by the help of teachers who know the convenient techniques for language learners.

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