

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING LISTENING SKILLS TO B2 LEVEL LEARNERS

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Abstract: *This article examines effective strategies for teaching listening skills to learners at the B2 level within the framework of communicative and cognitive language teaching. At this stage, learners are expected to comprehend extended speech, follow complex arguments, and interpret implicit meaning in authentic spoken discourse. The study analyzes the specific challenges faced by B2 learners, including processing speed, lexical density, variation in accents, and the need for inferencing skills. Particular attention is given to the role of top-down and bottom-up processing in listening comprehension and the importance of integrating both mechanisms in instructional practice. The article discusses a range of pedagogical strategies, such as pre-listening schema activation, guided listening tasks, segmentation of input, and post-listening analytical activities. The use of authentic audio materials and task-based learning is also evaluated as a means of developing learners' ability to cope with real-life listening situations. The findings indicate that systematic and cognitively informed instruction significantly improves listening comprehension, promotes learner autonomy, and enhances overall communicative competence at the B2 level.*

Keywords: *listening skills, B2 level learners, listening comprehension, language teaching strategies, top-down processing, bottom-up processing, authentic materials, task-based learning, second language acquisition, communicative competence.*

The development of listening skills at the B2 level represents a critical stage in second language acquisition, as learners transition from controlled comprehension to the processing of authentic, complex spoken discourse. At this level, listening is no longer limited to the recognition of familiar vocabulary and structures but involves the interpretation of extended speech, implicit meaning, speaker intention, and discourse organization. Consequently, effective instruction requires a systematic and theoretically grounded approach that integrates cognitive, communicative, and task-based principles.

Listening comprehension at the B2 level is best understood as an interaction between bottom-up and top-down processing mechanisms. Bottom-up processing involves the decoding of phonological input, lexical items, and syntactic structures, enabling learners to construct meaning from the acoustic signal. Top-down processing, in contrast, relies on prior knowledge, contextual cues, and expectations, allowing learners to predict and interpret incoming information. Successful listening instruction must ensure the balanced development of both processes. Overreliance on bottom-up strategies may lead to excessive focus on individual words, while exclusive dependence on top-down strategies may result in superficial comprehension.

One of the primary challenges for B2 learners lies in processing speed and lexical density. Authentic spoken language is characterized by rapid delivery, reduced forms, connected speech, and variability in pronunciation. For instance, sequences such as going

to are frequently realized as gonna, and want to as wanna, which may hinder recognition if learners are trained exclusively on formal language forms. Additionally, exposure to different accents and speech patterns requires learners to develop flexible perceptual abilities.

Effective strategies for teaching listening skills at this level begin with pre-listening activities aimed at activating relevant schemata. Learners are encouraged to anticipate content, identify key concepts, and recall related vocabulary. This stage facilitates top-down processing by establishing a conceptual framework within which new information can be integrated. For example, prior to listening to a discussion on environmental issues, learners may analyze key terms such as sustainability, climate policy, and carbon emissions, thereby preparing cognitive pathways for comprehension.

During the listening phase, instructional strategies should focus on guiding learners' attention and reducing cognitive overload. Segmenting audio input into manageable units allows for more effective processing, particularly when dealing with extended discourse. Tasks may include identifying the main idea, recognizing supporting arguments, or extracting specific details. Importantly, repeated exposure to the same audio material with varying task objectives promotes deeper processing and reinforces comprehension.

Post-listening activities play a crucial role in consolidating understanding and developing analytical skills. Learners may be required to reconstruct the content, evaluate the speaker's argument, or compare multiple viewpoints presented in the audio. Such tasks encourage the integration of listening with speaking and writing skills, thereby enhancing overall communicative competence. For instance, learners may listen to a debate and subsequently formulate their own position using relevant lexical and grammatical structures.

The use of authentic materials is essential for preparing learners to function in real-life communicative contexts. Audio resources such as interviews, lectures, podcasts, and discussions expose learners to natural language use, including discourse markers, hesitation phenomena, and pragmatic nuances. Engagement with authentic input also contributes to the development of inferencing skills, as learners must rely on contextual clues to interpret meaning beyond explicit linguistic content.

Table 1. Strategies for teaching listening skills at the B2 Level

Strategy	Description	Cognitive Focus
Pre-listening schema activation	Activating prior knowledge and predicting content	Top-down processing
Segmentation of input	Dividing audio into smaller units for analysis	Cognitive load reduction
Guided listening tasks	Focusing attention on specific information	Selective attention
Repeated listening	Listening multiple times with different objectives	Deep processing
Post-listening analysis	Interpreting and evaluating content	Critical thinking

The effectiveness of these strategies is supported by research in cognitive psychology, which emphasizes the importance of active engagement and meaningful processing in learning.

When learners are required to interact with input, form hypotheses, and verify interpretations, they develop not only comprehension skills but also metacognitive awareness.

This awareness enables them to monitor their own listening processes and adjust strategies accordingly.

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