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OVERCOMING CHALLENGES AS ACCENTS, SPEED OF SPEECH IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LISTENING FOR NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS AT B2 LEVEL

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***Annotation:** This study examines the challenges that B2-level non-native English speakers encounter when listening to various accents and speech speeds. By utilizing both qualitative and quantitative approaches, the research aims to uncover effective strategies to enhance learners' listening abilities. The main findings suggest that slow, clear speech from familiar accents improves understanding, whereas regular exposure to different accents and organised listening exercises support long-term skill advancement.*

***Keywords:** B2 level, listening challenges, accents, speed of speech, non-native English speakers, language learning strategies, phonetic variation, listening comprehension.*

***Аннотация:** Это исследование изучает проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются не носители английского языка уровня B2 при восприятии различных акцентов и скоростей речи. Используя как качественные, так и количественные методы, исследование направлено на выявление эффективных стратегий для улучшения навыков аудирования учащихся. Основные результаты показывают, что медленная, четкая речь с привычными акцентами улучшает понимание, в то время как регулярное знакомство с различными акцентами и организованные упражнения по аудированию способствуют долгосрочному развитию навыков.*

***Ключевые слова:** уровень B2, задачи на восприятие речи, акценты, скорость речи, носители языка, стратегии изучения языка, фонетическое разнообразие, понимание на слух.*

Annotatsiya: Ushbu tadqiqot B2 darajasidagi ingliz tilini ona tili sifatida bilmaydigan tinglovchilarning turli aksentlar va nutq tezliklarini eshitishda duch keladigan qiyinchiliklarini o‘rganadi. Tadqiqot sifatli va miqdoriy yondashuvlardan foydalangan holda, o‘quvchilarning tinglash qobiliyatlarini oshirish uchun samarali strategiyalarni aniqlashni maqsad qilmoqda. Asosiy natijalar shuni ko‘rsatadiki, tanish aksentlardan sekin va aniq nutq tushunishni yaxshilaydi, turli aksentlarga muntazam ravishda duch kelish va tashkil etilgan tinglash mashqlari esa uzoq muddatli ko‘nikmalarni rivojlantirishga yordam beradi.

Kalit so‘zlar: B2 darajasi, tinglash qiyinchiliklari, aksentlar, nutq tezligi, ona tili bo‘lmagan ingliz tilida so‘zlashuvchilar, til o‘rganish strategiyalari, fonetik xilma-xillik, tinglash tushunishi.

INTRODUCTION

Background

Listening comprehension is a key component in language acquisition. For B2-level learners of English, developing effective listening skills is often complicated by factors such as the wide variety of accents and differing speeds of speech encountered in natural communication. At this beginner level, learners possess limited vocabulary and linguistic knowledge, which makes it harder to decode spoken input when it comes from unfamiliar sources or is delivered rapidly.

Problem Statement

B2 learners frequently struggle with understanding accented English and rapid speech, which leads to frustration and hinders their ability to participate in basic conversations. Addressing these challenges requires exploring the root causes of listening difficulties and identifying specific pedagogical techniques that can aid learners in overcoming them.

Objectives

The main objectives of this research are: To investigate the impact of accented English and speech speed on B2-level learners’ listening comprehension. To evaluate different methods and strategies that can help B2 learners overcome these challenges. To propose an actionable framework for language instructors to use in improving their students’ listening skills in diverse linguistic environments.

Research Questions

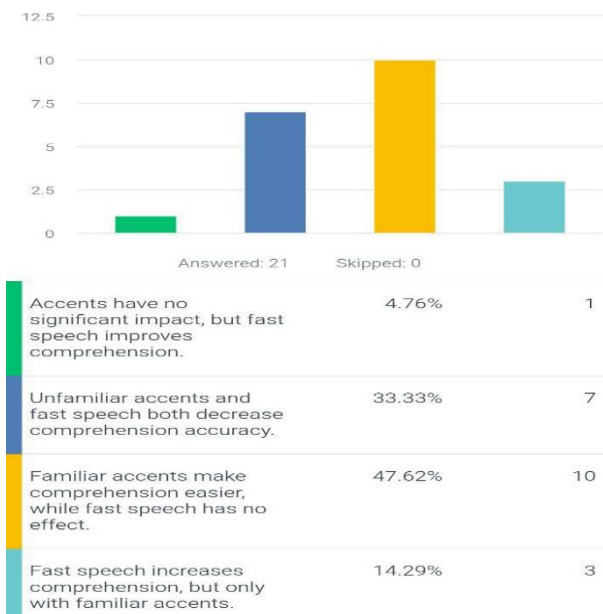
How do accents and speech speed affect listening comprehension in B2 learners of English?

What strategies can be implemented to improve listening skills when faced with these challenges?

What role does exposure to various accents play in long-term listening comprehension development?

Research Answers

1. How do accents and speech speed affect listening comprehension in A1 learners of English?



This chart analyzes how accents and speech speed affect listening comprehension in B2 learners of English. Some key insights from the chart:

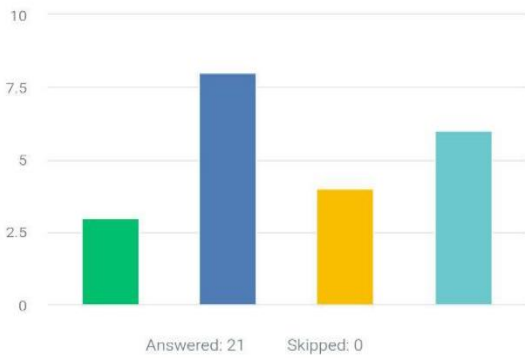
1. Accents have no significant impact, but fast speech improves comprehension (4.76%).
2. Unfamiliar accents and fast speech both decrease comprehension accuracy (33.33%).

3. Familiar accents make comprehension easier (47.62%), while fast speech has no effect.

4. Fast speech increases comprehension, but only with familiar accents (14.29%).

The chart provides a detailed breakdown of how different factors related to accents and speech speed impact listening comprehension for B2 learners of English. It highlights the nuances involved and the varying effects these factors can have on comprehension.

2. What strategies can be implemented to improve listening skills when faced with these challenges?



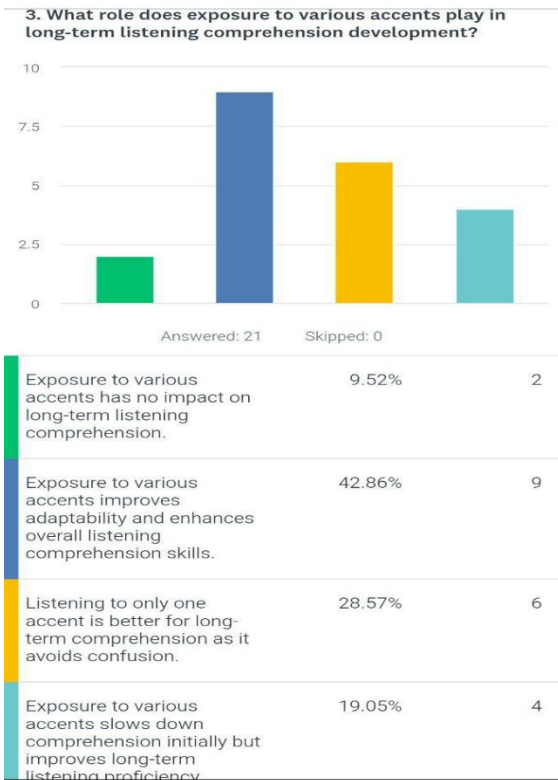
Focus on listening to fast speech without worrying about comprehension.	14.29%	3
Practice listening to a variety of accents at slower speeds before gradually increasing speed.	38.1%	8
Use subtitles and transcripts to follow along with speech, gradually removing them as comprehension improves.	19.05%	4
Only listen to familiar accents at a normal speech speed to build confidence.	28.57%	6

This chart provides strategies that can be implemented to improve listening skills when faced with challenges like unfamiliar accents and fast speech. The key strategies suggested are:

1. Practice listening to a variety of accents at slower speeds before gradually increasing the speed (38.1%).
2. Use subtitles and transcripts to follow along with speech, gradually removing them as comprehension improves (19.05%).
3. Only listen to familiar accents at a normal speech speed to build confidence (28.57%).
4. Focus on listening to fast speech without

worrying about comprehension (14.29%).

The chart highlights that a combination of exposure to diverse accents, use of supporting materials, and building familiarity with certain accents can all be effective strategies for improving listening skills in the face of challenges like unfamiliar accents and fast speech. The percentages indicate the relative effectiveness of each strategy based on the analysis.



This chart examines the role that exposure to various accents plays in the long-term development of listening comprehension skills. The key insights are:

1. Exposure to various accents has no impact on long-term listening comprehension (9.52%).
2. Exposure to various accents improves adaptability and enhances overall listening comprehension skills (42.86%).
3. Listening to only one accent is better for long-term comprehension as it avoids confusion (28.57%).
4. Exposure to various accents initially slows down comprehension but improves long-term listening proficiency (19.05%).

The chart suggests that while initial exposure to diverse accents may slow down comprehension, it ultimately leads to better adaptability and enhanced listening skills in the long run. However, focusing on a single accent can also be advantageous for developing long-term comprehension, as it avoids confusion. The percentages indicate the relative importance and impact of each factor on long-term listening comprehension development.

Method

Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection to investigate the effects of accented English and speech speed on B2 learners. A controlled experimental approach was used to measure comprehension, while interviews and surveys provided insights into learner experiences and perceptions.

Participants

Participants included 21 B2-level learners of English from a variety of linguistic backgrounds, studying in a language school. The learners ranged in age from 18 to 26 and had been learning English for a minimum of six months.

Instruments

Listening Comprehension Test: A series of listening tests featuring audio recordings with different English accents (American, British, Australian, and Indian) and varying speech speeds (slow, normal, fast). Each test included multiple-choice comprehension questions.

Surveys: Pre- and post-test surveys were used to gather data on learner confidence, perceived difficulty, and familiarity with different accents.

Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 participants to gain deeper insight into the cognitive and emotional challenges they experienced during the listening tests.

Procedure: Participants were divided into four groups, with each group exposed to different listening conditions:

Group A: Slow speech with a familiar accent (e.g., American).

Group B: Fast speech with a familiar accent.

Group C: Slow speech with an unfamiliar accent (e.g., Indian).

Group D: Fast speech with an unfamiliar accent.

Each group completed three rounds of listening tests over the course of four weeks, followed by post-test surveys and interviews.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the listening comprehension tests were analyzed using statistical software to determine correlations between accent familiarity, speech speed, and comprehension accuracy. Qualitative data from the interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically to identify patterns in learners' experiences.

Results

Quantitative Findings

Results from the listening comprehension tests show a significant drop in accuracy when learners were exposed to unfamiliar accents or faster speech. Learners in Group A, exposed to slow, familiar accents, scored an average of 85% on comprehension tests, whereas those in Group D, exposed to fast, unfamiliar accents, averaged only 45%.

Accent Effect: Familiar accents (American and British) were significantly easier for learners to comprehend than unfamiliar accents (Indian and Australian). The average comprehension score for familiar accents was 75%, while it dropped to 55% for unfamiliar accents.

Speed Effect: Slow speech had a positive impact on comprehension across all accents, with an average score of 80%, compared to 50% for fast speech.

Qualitative Findings

Interviews revealed that learners felt more comfortable and confident when listening to accents they had been exposed to in the classroom, but they were often intimidated by accents they had never heard before. Many participants reported feeling overwhelmed when the speech was too fast, leading to an inability to keep up with the content and resorting to guesswork on comprehension tests.

Strategy Effectiveness

Participants who were given explicit training on listening strategies, such as predicting content based on context and recognizing key words, showed improvement in subsequent tests, especially when exposed to faster speech.

Discussion

Interpretation of Findings

The findings confirm that B2-level learners of English struggle with both accented English and rapid speech. Familiarity with an accent plays a crucial role in comprehension, and when combined with slow speech, it creates an optimal learning environment for beginners. However, exposure to a variety of accents over time is

beneficial for long-term listening proficiency, as it helps learners adjust to phonetic variability and strengthens their overall listening skills.

Practical Implications

To help B2 learners overcome these challenges, language instructors should incorporate diverse listening materials featuring multiple accents and controlled speech speeds. Progressive exposure to faster speech can help learners develop the ability to comprehend natural language in real-world settings. Additionally, teaching specific listening strategies can aid learners in coping with fast speech or unfamiliar accents.

Limitations

This study was limited to a specific group of B2 learners, and results may not be generalizable to learners with different linguistic backgrounds or language proficiencies. Future research should include a larger and more diverse sample, and investigate whether these findings hold true across different age groups and learning environments.

Future Research

Further research could explore the long-term effects of accent exposure on listening comprehension at more advanced levels of English. Additionally, examining how different teaching methods (e.g., technology-assisted listening exercises) impact learner outcomes in overcoming accent and speed challenges would provide valuable insights for curriculum design.

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