



From struggle to success

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discusses improving listening skills with digital applications.

Introduction

Developing listening skills can be quite challenging for English learners, primarily due to their limited exposure to natural, real-life speech. This lack of exposure restricts learners' ability to practise understanding natural speech patterns, accents and intonations, making it difficult to follow real-life conversations (Tsang, 2021). Additionally, many learners struggle to understand spoken language at the chunk level, which further complicates their ability to derive meaning from what they hear. This can lead to errors such as: sound misperception; confusion; omission; addition; and misinformation (Luu & Trinh, 2023).

In addition, learners frequently face difficulties in understanding various English accents due to limited exposure in their learning environments. This can

hinder their ability to comprehend spoken English in diverse contexts (Tsang, 2021). Understanding idiomatic expressions and colloquial language adds another layer of difficulty, as these elements are frequently omitted from school textbooks or class materials (Tsang, 2021).

To address listening problems faced by English learners, more emphasis should be placed on sounds, actual listening and spoken input (Tsang, 2021). Teachers should provide opportunities for students to practise listening to various sounds, engage in real-life listening exercises and interact with spoken language. By giving priority to these elements, teachers can provide more effective support to students in enhancing their listening skills.

Technology can play a crucial role in enhancing listening skills by providing targeted tools that address specific

challenges learners face. When choosing which applications to integrate into the classroom, it is important to consider several key criteria, including: user friendliness; flexibility; and the inclusion of authentic language features.

User friendliness

The first criterion is the application's user-friendly design. Teachers should prioritise apps that are easy to navigate, ensuring that both students and teachers can use them without extensive training or technical difficulties (Vu *et al.*, 2024:150–166). A user-friendly interface is essential, as it allows students to focus on their listening practice without being hindered by complicated features or technical frustrations. The applications should also be accessible to all students, including those who may not have the

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should introduce themselves, share a bit about their background and discuss a topic related to the agreed-upon theme. Encourage them to speak clearly and include details that might be of interest to students from a different cultural background.

Once the introductory videos are uploaded, students will watch the videos from their peers in the other district or country. As they listen, they should take notes on key points, interesting cultural differences or questions they have about what they heard. After listening, students will record a video response, answering any questions posed by their peers, providing feedback or sharing their own thoughts on the topic.

Over the course of several weeks, students will continue to engage with each other through the shared video platform discussing new topics or responding to follow-up questions. Teachers can introduce specific discussion prompts that focus on listening for certain linguistic features, such as idiomatic expressions, slang or accent differences.

After several rounds of exchanges, ask students to share what they learnt about the other culture, how their listening skills improved and any challenges they faced in understanding different accents or cultural references. Consider having students work in groups to create a final video presentation on what they learnt from the exchange. They could focus

on specific cultural insights, language differences or how their listening and communication skills have improved.

The purpose of this activity is to improve students' listening comprehension and intercultural communication skills by having them participate in a cross-cultural exchange with peers from different regions or countries.

Conclusion

Improving listening skills in English learners requires a strategy that addresses the challenges posed by limited exposure to natural speech, diverse accents and colloquial language. The suggested activities outlined in this paper offer practical strategies for maximising the potential of digital applications, namely, Character AI, video sharing platforms, Murf AI, Suno, Edpuzzle and Lyrics Training (or Lingoclip). The suggested activities are designed to help students overcome the listening challenges they encounter in their language learning journey. At the same time, teachers can transform listening from an obstacle into an accessible and engaging skill, enabling students to achieve greater fluency and confidence in English.

Recommended applications

Character ai. (2024). *Character.ai*. Available from <https://character.ai/> (Last accessed 21 October 2024).

Edpuzzle. (2024). *Edpuzzle*. Available from <https://edpuzzle.com/> (Last accessed 21 October 2024).

Lingoclip. (2024). *Lingoclip*. Available from <https://lingoclip.com/> (Last accessed 21 October 2024).

Lyrics Training. (2024). *Lyrics Training*. Available from <https://lyricstraining.com/#nr> (Last accessed 21 October 2024).

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Suno. (2024). *Suno*. Available from <https://suno.com/about> (Last accessed 21 October 2024).

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