

THE ROLE OF GRAMMAR IN IELTS LISTENING CLASS

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Abstract: *the aim of this study is to explore the role of grammatical categories in IELTS listening. By conducting the grammatical problems and difficulties in listening comprehension, a series of solutions are proposed and applied into actions. Knowing grammar can help students get grammatically correct answers. So, it is important that grammar should be addressed in order to improve comprehension and accuracy in IELTS listening.*

Key Words: *Grammar mastery, Listening difficulties, Listening comprehension, Alternatives to listening Assessment*

INTRODUCTION

To study abroad, students must possess a strong command of English and obtain IELTS or TOEFL certificates. While both tests assess similar skills, they differ in the types of questions asked. This article specifically concentrates on the IELTS test, particularly the listening section. The listening section includes various question formats that can be addressed effectively through grammar and comprehension skills. This research primarily examines these questions and offers relevant recommendations for teaching and learning listening skills through specific strategies and tips.

Davies et al. (2000) define listening as an active, complex process rather than a passive one. This involves listeners needing to distinguish sounds, understand lexical and grammatical forms, analyze stress and intonation, and interpret all of this within relevant social and cultural contexts. When preparing for the IELTS Test, particularly in the listening section, it's important to identify which grammatical forms are essential to master. Additionally, the extent to which grammar should be emphasized in classroom discussions can vary, as grammar sections are not always included in IELTS course materials and are not tested in isolation, leading many test takers to overlook its significance. Listening comprehension is influenced by several factors, including the ability to understand speech and the role of phonemes, words, and grammatical structures (Liu, 2015). Grammar contributes to challenges in listening comprehension alongside limited vocabulary and misconceptions about the tasks (Graham, 2006; Hopkins, 2008). Furthermore, context, situational factors, prior knowledge, and the listener's expectations also play crucial roles.





Listening comprehension, as defined by Rost (1994), is a process that requires collaboration and interaction. In this process, listeners must actively engage in constructing meaning. When listeners receive spoken input, they understand it by differentiating sounds and drawing on background knowledge and grammatical structures. Additional linguistic features, such as stress and intonation, along with non-linguistic elements, also play a role. Research by Vandergrift (2007) highlighted that both beginner-level elementary school students and university students studying French emphasized the importance of making predictions, collaborating with peers for monitoring, and having confidence for effective listening.

Typically, listening classes are part of a broader curriculum, integrating listening skills with other language skills. In this context, listening activities can often serve as a foundation for speaking tasks. While IELTS classes tend to separate the instruction of these skills, insights gained from listening, such as specific expressions, can be applied in speaking classes. Experts argue that listening plays a crucial role in language teaching by facilitating second language acquisition.


Rost (1994) defines listening comprehension as a process that requires collaboration and interaction. In this process, listeners must actively engage to derive meaning. When they receive spoken input, they comprehend it by distinguishing sounds and utilizing their background knowledge and understanding of grammatical structure.

Research by Vandergrift (2007) revealed that beginner-level elementary students and university French learners emphasized the significance of making predictions, collaborating with peers for monitoring, and having confidence for effective listening.

Typically, listening classes are integrated into general courses, combining listening skills with other skills. As a result, listening activities can sometimes serve as a basis for speaking exercises. While IELTS classes treat listening and speaking as separate skills, some input from listening sessions, like specific expressions, can be applied in speaking classes.

Awareness is essential in language learning; when students are conscious of the learning process, they become more attuned to what they hear. Students won't benefit from listening activities unless they actively notice the content. When listening is viewed as a means of acquisition, teachers can implement two-phase activities: noticing and restructuring. In noticing activities, students listen to audio, then revisit the text to enhance comprehension and raise awareness. Listening again helps them compare what they hear with what is written, highlighting differences. Restructuring activities involve using specific items from the audio productively, such as filling in gaps with expressions or linguistic elements they've learned. Understanding spoken discourse involves two processes: bottom-up and top-down processing. Bottom-up processing starts with the





input itself, requiring listeners to have a solid grasp of vocabulary and grammar. This process involves scanning the input for familiar words and analyzing the relationships between components in a sentence using grammatical knowledge (Richards, 2008). Developing students' listening skills is one of the most challenging tasks for ESL teachers, as effective listening takes time and extensive practice to master. Students often find this task frustrating due to the lack of clear-cut rules, unlike grammar instruction. While speaking and writing have specific exercises that can facilitate improvement, methods to enhance listening skills are harder to define.

Teachers need to focus on cultivating students' micro skills in listening comprehension. For beginners, a critical skill is the ability to discriminate between English pronunciation, intonation, and the flow of language.

They must learn to identify the main ideas in spoken content. Teachers should emphasize the ability to identify main information and guide students in understanding the overall meaning of listening materials. For instance, instructors can ask students to focus on the general meaning of a passage and summarize key points. Predictive ability is another vital micro skill in listening. In everyday communication, individuals unconsciously predict what speakers will say based on contextual knowledge.

To enhance this skill, teachers can pose questions related to the listening material or introduce relevant background information prior to training. This approach helps students understand the objectives and requirements of the listening tasks.


Additionally, the ability to infer the meaning of words is an important listening micro skill. Listening comprehension does not require understanding every single word; rather, it involves grasping key terms that significantly impact understanding. It is normal for students not to catch every word spoken. However, they can often deduce the meaning of unfamiliar words based on the context of the discussion, the grammatical structure, and their existing knowledge of the topic.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study suggest that a single student can achieve better outcomes in just a few days, highlighting a significant disconnect between learning, teaching, testing, and assessment. Therefore, it is concluded that addressing this gap through structured tasks, varied assessment options, and standardized testing is preferable to merely adapting or simplifying the increasingly popular IELTS test.

Familiarity with grammar helps test takers predict which words are needed to fill in the blanks. A certain level of grammar knowledge is essential for this section, as precision in spelling and grammar is crucial in this assessment. To enhance students' listening skills, teachers should ground their instruction in theoretical principles.





Due to constraints in resources and teacher training, both textbooks and teacher's guides should support educators by providing insights into relevant theories and suggesting activities for listening classes, as well as methods for training students in various listening strategies. It is essential for teachers to offer ample opportunities for students to practice their listening skills and actively participate in the listening process.

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