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TEACHING LISTENING SKILLS

Adaxanova Gulnora
University of Exact and Social Sciences
Faculty of linguistics
E-mail: n.g.andreyevna@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Listening is a central component of communicative competence, yet it remains challenging for many learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). Learners may find it difficult to process rapid speech, connected speech, unfamiliar vocabulary, varied accents, and the contextual meaning of spoken messages. This article examines how authentic multimedia can be integrated into listening instruction and how it may support comprehension, strategic listening, learner engagement, and autonomy. The study adopts a qualitative, literature-based research design and synthesises selected books and peer-reviewed studies on listening pedagogy, authentic materials, multimedia learning, metacognition, and captioned media. The reviewed literature is analysed thematically, with attention to (1) the nature of listening comprehension, (2) the pedagogical value and limitations of authentic materials, (3) the contribution of audio-visual and captioned resources, and (4) the role of metacognitive strategies and learner support. The synthesis suggests that multimedia is most educationally useful when it is integrated into a structured instructional sequence rather than used as entertainment or passive exposure. Pre-listening preparation, focused first listening, selective replay, note-taking, reflection, and appropriately designed post-listening tasks can help learners use authentic input more purposefully. At the same time, excessive visual information, difficult language, overreliance on subtitles, and poorly selected materials may increase cognitive demands. The article concludes that authentic multimedia should be selected according to learners' proficiency, lesson objectives, and task demands, and should be combined with explicit strategy instruction and teacher guidance.

Keywords: *listening skills; listening comprehension; authentic materials; multimedia learning; EFL; metacognitive strategies; captioned video.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Listening is not simply the act of hearing sounds. It is an active process in which listeners identify speech sounds, recognise words, interpret grammatical relationships,

connect ideas, use contextual information, and construct meaning. In everyday communication, listeners often have little control over the speed of speech and cannot ask a speaker to repeat every sentence. For this reason, the ability to understand spoken language is essential for successful participation in academic, professional, and social situations.

In foreign-language classrooms, listening has sometimes been treated mainly as a receptive activity in which students listen to a recording and answer comprehension questions. Such practice can provide useful assessment opportunities, but it may not fully explain how listening works or teach learners how to manage comprehension difficulties. Field (2008) argues for closer attention to the processes that occur while listeners decode and interpret spoken language. Rost (2002) likewise presents listening as a complex skill that involves linguistic knowledge, interpretation, and interaction with spoken input.

EFL learners may experience several recurring difficulties. Spoken language is temporary: words disappear as soon as they are produced. Speakers may use contractions, reductions, linking, assimilation, and other features of connected speech. Learners may also encounter unfamiliar accents, idiomatic expressions, topic-specific vocabulary, and speech delivered at a natural pace. When a learner misses one word or phrase, this may affect the interpretation of the following information. Underwood (1989) identifies a range of practical problems that can hinder listening, including the speed of delivery, limited vocabulary, and the difficulty of repeating spoken input.

Authentic multimedia resources offer one way to expose learners to language as it is used beyond the classroom. Examples include interviews, podcasts, news reports, documentaries, public talks, travel videos, conversations, and other audio-visual materials created primarily for real communicative purposes rather than specifically for language teaching. Gilmore (2007) discusses authenticity in foreign-language learning and highlights the importance of considering both the materials and the learning context in which they are used. Authenticity should therefore not be understood as a guarantee of learning; it is a resource that requires careful selection and pedagogical mediation.

Multimedia can combine spoken language with images, written captions, diagrams, and contextual cues. Brett (1997) examined the use of multimedia in listening comprehension, while Gruba (2006) considered video-mediated listening from a media-literacy perspective. Mayer's (2009) work on multimedia learning provides a broader theoretical explanation of how learners process verbal and visual information. Captioned media also have particular relevance to language learning because subtitles

can provide written support for speech, although their use needs to be planned carefully (Vanderplank, 2016).

Technology alone, however, does not guarantee effective listening development. Learners need to know what to listen for, how to respond when comprehension breaks down, and how to evaluate their understanding. Research on metacognitive instruction emphasises planning, monitoring, and evaluating listening (Goh, 2008; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Cross (2011) also explores metacognitive instruction for less-skilled listeners. These perspectives suggest that authentic multimedia is most beneficial when it is connected to explicit strategy instruction.

The purpose of this article is to examine the pedagogical contribution of authentic multimedia to the teaching of listening skills in EFL contexts. Rather than reporting a new classroom experiment, the article synthesises selected literature and develops practical principles for integrating authentic audio-visual resources into listening lessons.

1.1. Research aim and objectives

The main aim is to analyse how authentic multimedia resources can support the development of EFL learners' listening skills. The objectives are:

- to explain the main cognitive and linguistic demands involved in listening comprehension;
- to examine the potential benefits and limitations of authentic audio and video materials;
- to consider the role of captions, replay functions, and other forms of multimedia support;
- to identify metacognitive and task-based strategies that can guide learners before, during, and after listening;
- to propose practical recommendations for teachers.

1.2. Research questions

The article addresses the following questions:

- What difficulties commonly affect EFL learners' listening comprehension?
- In what ways can authentic multimedia resources support listening instruction?
- How can teachers combine multimedia input with metacognitive strategies and appropriate learner support?

1.3. Significance of the study

The article is intended to contribute to listening pedagogy by bringing together research on listening processes, authenticity, multimedia learning, and metacognition. It may be

useful to EFL teachers who wish to move beyond listening exercises based only on textbook recordings. It also offers a framework for selecting resources and designing tasks that make authentic input manageable and purposeful.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Listening as an active process

Listening comprehension involves the interaction of bottom-up and top-down processes. Bottom-up processing refers to the recognition of sounds, words, grammatical forms, and sentence-level information. Top-down processing involves using prior knowledge, expectations, context, and knowledge of the world to interpret what is heard. Effective listeners move between these processes rather than relying exclusively on one. Anderson and Lynch (1988) describe listening as an active process in which listeners construct meaning and make use of contextual knowledge. Field (2008) further emphasises the importance of understanding the processes that take place during listening, including the recognition of spoken forms and the interpretation of meaning.

A difficulty at the sound-recognition level can have consequences for overall comprehension. Learners who know a word in written form may fail to recognise it when it is pronounced quickly or connected to neighbouring words. Conversely, learners may understand the general topic through context even when some individual words are unfamiliar. Teaching should therefore develop both accurate decoding and the ability to use context strategically. Rost (2002) treats listening as a multidimensional skill and stresses the relationship between listening input, interpretation, and communication.

2.2. Common difficulties in EFL listening

One frequently reported challenge is the temporary nature of speech. Unlike a written text, a spoken message is not automatically available for repeated inspection. Learners may lose important information while trying to understand an earlier phrase. Another challenge is the speed and natural rhythm of speech. Native and proficient speakers often reduce or link sounds, use contractions, and speak in groups of words rather than as isolated dictionary forms. Underwood (1989) discusses speed, vocabulary, and the limited control learners may have over spoken input as important classroom concerns. Vocabulary knowledge is also important, but listening difficulties cannot be explained only by a lack of vocabulary. Learners may know the meaning of individual words but fail to recognise them in connected speech. They may also misunderstand a speaker's intention, attitude, or implied meaning. Ur (1984) offers practical guidance for teaching listening comprehension and encourages teachers to consider the demands placed on

learners by listening tasks. Brown (2001) situates listening within a broader interactive approach to language pedagogy, in which receptive skills contribute to communicative competence.

2.3. Authentic materials in language learning

Authentic materials are commonly understood as materials produced for purposes other than language teaching. Examples include radio broadcasts, online videos, interviews, podcasts, public announcements, and documentaries. Their value lies partly in exposing learners to language in meaningful contexts, including natural pronunciation, discourse organisation, vocabulary, and communicative purposes. Gilmore (2007) reviews the concepts of authenticity and authentic materials in foreign-language learning and shows why authenticity requires careful consideration rather than a simple distinction between authentic and non-authentic texts.

Authentic materials can make classroom listening more closely related to real-world communication. A short interview, for example, may expose learners to turn-taking, spontaneous responses, hesitation, informal vocabulary, and changes in speaking pace. A documentary may provide subject-specific vocabulary and visual context. Nevertheless, authentic input can be too difficult if its linguistic level, length, speed, or topic is not appropriate. Teachers should therefore select materials according to learning objectives and learner proficiency, and should adapt the task rather than necessarily simplifying the original recording.

2.4. Multimedia and listening comprehension

Multimedia resources combine two or more modes of communication, such as audio, video, images, and written text. In listening instruction, video can provide information about the setting, participants, objects, gestures, and communicative situation. Such contextual information may help learners make predictions and interpret meaning. Brett (1997) investigated the effects of multimedia use on listening comprehension, making the study particularly relevant to the present topic.

Gruba (2006) approaches video-mediated listening through media literacy, suggesting that video should be treated as a meaningful text rather than merely as decoration accompanying audio. Learners need to interpret how images and spoken language work together, and teachers can guide them to notice the relationship between visual information and verbal messages. Mayer (2009) provides principles for understanding multimedia learning, including the importance of managing the presentation of words and pictures so that learners are not overloaded with unnecessary information.

A key pedagogical implication is that more media are not always better. A video with rapid editing, background music, dense captions, and unfamiliar vocabulary may

divide learners' attention. The teacher should select short, coherent clips and design tasks that direct attention to relevant information. Visuals should support comprehension rather than distract from the listening objective.

2.5. Captions and subtitles

Captions and subtitles can make spoken language more accessible by presenting a written version of some or all of the speech. They may help learners connect sound forms with spelling, notice unfamiliar words, and confirm what they have heard. Vanderplank (2016) examines captioned media in foreign-language learning and teaching, including the use of subtitles as tools for language learning. The pedagogical value of captions depends on learners' proficiency, the nature of the material, and the task being completed.

Captions should not automatically be used in every listening activity. If learners read continuously, they may pay less attention to the audio. On the other hand, removing captions completely may make a difficult recording inaccessible. A staged approach can be useful: learners first listen without captions for the general idea, listen again with a focused task, and then use captions to check selected language. In later stages, captions can be reduced or removed as learners become more confident.

2.6. Metacognitive strategies in listening

Metacognition refers to learners' awareness and management of their own thinking and learning. In listening, metacognitive strategies commonly include planning, monitoring, and evaluating. Before listening, learners can activate background knowledge, predict content, and identify a purpose. During listening, they can monitor understanding, notice confusion, and decide whether to continue or focus on key information. After listening, they can evaluate their performance and identify what should be practised next.

Vandergrift (1999) discusses strategies that can facilitate second-language listening comprehension. Vandergrift (2004) considers the relationship between listening to learn and learning to listen, while Vandergrift (2007) reviews developments in listening research. Goh (2008) focuses on metacognitive instruction and its implications for second-language listening development. Vandergrift and Goh (2012) provide a comprehensive account of teaching and learning listening through metacognition. Cross (2011) further explores metacognitive instruction for learners who experience difficulty with listening.

These studies support the view that learners should not simply be given more listening texts; they should also be taught how to approach them. Strategy instruction can help learners become more independent and better able to manage uncertainty. It is

particularly relevant to multimedia tasks, where learners may need to decide when to replay a segment, whether to use captions, and how to combine audio information with visual context.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

This article uses a qualitative, literature-based research design. It does not report a new experiment with student participants. Instead, it examines a selected group of academic books, research articles, and conference proceedings related to listening pedagogy, authentic materials, multimedia learning, captions, and metacognitive strategies. A literature-based design is appropriate for identifying recurring themes, comparing theoretical perspectives, and developing pedagogical recommendations from existing scholarship.

3.2. Selection of sources

The source set consists of 20 works supplied for the present study. These include foundational books on listening and language pedagogy, research on multimedia and video-mediated listening, studies of authentic materials, and publications on metacognitive listening strategies. The sources include Anderson and Lynch (1988), Brett (1997), Brown (2001), Cárdenas-Claros and Gruba (2007), Cross (2011), Field (2008), Gilmore (2007), Goh (2008), Gruba (2006), Mayer (2009), Ockey (2007), Rost (2002, 2024), Underwood (1989), Ur (1984), Vandergrift (1999, 2004, 2007), Vandergrift and Goh (2012), and Vanderplank (2016).

The sources were considered relevant when they addressed at least one of the following areas: listening comprehension and instruction; authentic materials; multimedia or video-based learning; captioned media; or metacognitive listening strategies. The source set includes both theoretical books and empirical or review-based publications. Because the present article uses a selected bibliography rather than a systematic database search, it should not be interpreted as an exhaustive systematic review of all research on listening.

3.3. Analytical procedure

The literature was examined through thematic analysis. First, each source was considered in relation to its main contribution to listening instruction. Second, recurring concepts were grouped into broader themes: (1) listening processes and learner difficulties; (2) authenticity and real-world language exposure; (3) multimedia and visual support; (4) captions and subtitles; and (5) metacognitive strategies and learner autonomy. Third, the themes were compared to identify areas of agreement, potential tensions, and practical implications for classroom teaching.

3.4. Scope and limitations

The analysis is limited to the 20 references listed in the bibliography. The sources differ in publication date, research purpose, and methodological approach. The article does not claim that all works directly test the same teaching intervention or that their findings can be combined statistically. In addition, the discussion of classroom procedures represents pedagogical recommendations derived from the literature rather than the results of a newly conducted classroom experiment. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings.

4. RESULTS

The thematic analysis identified five connected areas that are important for teaching listening through authentic multimedia. These themes are presented as a synthesis of the selected literature, not as numerical outcomes from a new experiment.

4.1. Listening requires both decoding and meaning construction

The literature presents listening as an active process involving the recognition of linguistic forms and the interpretation of meaning in context. Anderson and Lynch (1988), Field (2008), and Rost (2002) all provide foundations for understanding listening as more than passive hearing. Learners need opportunities to recognise sounds and words while also using context, prior knowledge, and expectations to interpret messages.

A practical implication is that listening lessons should include different purposes. Global listening tasks can help learners identify the topic, setting, or speaker's main message. Selective listening tasks can direct attention to specific information such as names, reasons, dates, or examples. Detailed listening tasks can focus on how particular phrases are pronounced or how ideas are connected. Using more than one listening purpose helps address different aspects of comprehension.

4.2. Authentic materials provide exposure to real-world language

The literature on authenticity indicates that real-world materials can expose learners to language features that may be underrepresented in carefully graded recordings. Gilmore (2007) highlights the complexity of authenticity in language learning, while Underwood (1989) and Ur (1984) provide practical foundations for listening instruction. Authentic resources can include natural pace, varied accents, spontaneous speech, discourse markers, and topic-specific language.

The synthesis also indicates that authenticity must be balanced with accessibility. A recording that is too long or linguistically demanding may frustrate learners and prevent meaningful engagement. Teachers can address this problem by selecting a short section, providing a clear listening purpose, pre-teaching only essential

vocabulary, and designing tasks that focus on the main message before detailed language.

4.3. Multimedia can provide useful contextual support

The multimedia literature suggests that audio-visual resources may support comprehension by connecting spoken language to relevant visual context. Brett (1997) is directly concerned with multimedia and listening comprehension. Gruba (2006) highlights the need to interpret video as a multimodal text, while Mayer (2009) offers principles for managing verbal and visual information.

The results of the thematic synthesis suggest that visual support is most useful when it is relevant to the listening objective. Images of a location, a demonstration of a process, or the facial expressions of speakers may help learners interpret a message. Decorative images, rapid scene changes, or unrelated visual effects may distract attention. The teacher should therefore consider the informational value of each visual element.

4.4. Captions can function as temporary learning support

Captioned media can help learners connect spoken and written forms, check uncertain words, and notice how pronunciation relates to spelling. Vanderplank (2016) provides a focused discussion of captioned media in language learning. The analysis suggests that captions are best treated as a learning support that can be adjusted according to the task, rather than as a permanent requirement.

For example, learners may first watch a short clip without captions and identify its general meaning. They may then watch it again with captions to check key information or identify a phrase they did not recognise. Finally, they may listen to a short segment without captions and summarise it. This sequence encourages attention to audio while still allowing written support when needed.

4.5. Metacognitive instruction supports learner independence

A further theme is the importance of planning, monitoring, and evaluating. Vandergrift (1999, 2004, 2007), Goh (2008), Cross (2011), and Vandergrift and Goh (2012) emphasise the role of strategies and metacognitive awareness in listening development. Learners benefit when they reflect on what they understood, where comprehension broke down, and which strategy helped them recover meaning.

The analysis suggests that multimedia functions such as pause, replay, and speed adjustment should be taught as strategic tools. Learners should not replay an entire video repeatedly without a purpose. Instead, they can identify a difficult segment, replay it to answer a specific question, compare their understanding with captions if appropriate, and then listen again at a natural pace.

4.6. Summary of the thematic findings

Theme	Main contribution	Teaching implication
Listening processes	Listening combines sound recognition and meaning construction.	Use global, selective, and detailed listening tasks.
Authenticity	Real-world input exposes learners to natural language.	Select short, relevant materials matched to learner level.
Multimedia	Visual context can support interpretation.	Use visuals that directly contribute to meaning.
Captions	Written support can help learners check speech.	Use captions selectively and gradually reduce dependence.
Metacognition	Planning, monitoring, and evaluation support strategic listening.	Include reflection and strategy-focused follow-up tasks.

5. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this article was to examine how authentic multimedia can contribute to the teaching of listening skills. The literature synthesis indicates that multimedia is not an independent solution to listening difficulties. Its educational value depends on the relationship between the material, the learning objective, the learner's proficiency, and the instructional support provided by the teacher.

5.1. From listening testing to listening development

A common classroom pattern is to play a recording and ask students to answer questions. Such activities can assess comprehension, but they may not reveal why learners misunderstand a message or how they can improve. Field (2008) encourages attention to the listening process itself. In line with this perspective, lessons should include activities that help learners notice how they recognise words, use context, and recover when they lose the meaning.

Teachers can make the process visible by asking learners to explain which words or phrases caused difficulty, what they understood from the context, and how they checked their interpretation. This does not mean that every listening lesson must become a lengthy analysis of speech. Rather, brief reflection can help students become more aware of the strategies they use.

5.2. Selecting authentic multimedia appropriately

Authentic materials are valuable because they expose learners to language beyond the

controlled classroom environment. However, the selection of material should be guided by a clear pedagogical purpose. Gilmore (2007) shows that authenticity is a complex concept, and it is important to consider the relationship between the original material and the classroom task. A video may be authentic in origin but unsuitable for a particular group if its content is too specialised, its speech is too fast, or its length exceeds learners' attention and processing capacity.

A practical selection checklist may include the following questions: Is the topic relevant to learners? Is the recording clear enough to hear? Does the clip contain language features appropriate to the lesson? Is the length manageable? Do the visuals support the spoken message? Can the teacher create a task that requires learners to listen for meaning rather than merely watch? These questions help teachers avoid choosing multimedia simply because it is attractive or technologically advanced.

5.3. Balancing audio, video, and written support

Brett (1997), Gruba (2006), and Mayer (2009) provide different perspectives on multimedia and learning. Taken together, their work supports a careful approach to combining modes. Video can supply context, but it should not replace attention to speech. Captions can support recognition, but they should not become the only source of information. The teacher should decide which mode learners need at each stage of the task.

One possible sequence is to begin with audio or video without captions so that learners focus on the overall message. A second viewing can direct attention to selected details. Captions may then be introduced to confirm uncertain phrases or examine useful expressions. Finally, learners can listen again without written support. This staged use of captions is consistent with the idea that support should facilitate learning while encouraging increasing independence.

5.4. Integrating metacognitive strategies

The metacognitive literature offers a strong rationale for making learners active participants in listening. Vandergrift and Goh (2012) describe metacognition as central to the development of second-language listening. Goh (2008) and Cross (2011) also highlight the value of instruction that helps learners understand and regulate their listening. In multimedia-based lessons, planning may involve predicting content from a title or image; monitoring may involve checking whether the speaker's message matches the prediction; and evaluation may involve identifying which strategies were effective.

Teachers can use short reflection prompts after listening: What did I understand? Which part was difficult? Did I use context to guess meaning? Did replay help? Did

captions help me notice a sound or word? What will I do differently next time? Such questions turn listening into a learning process and help learners develop a more purposeful approach to independent practice.

5.5. A practical lesson framework

Based on the literature, the following framework can be used to organise a listening lesson with authentic multimedia:

- Before listening: introduce the topic, activate prior knowledge, clarify the task, and invite learners to predict possible content. Pre-teach only essential words that are necessary for understanding the main message.
- First listening: play the clip without interruption. Ask learners to identify the topic, speaker, setting, purpose, or main idea. Avoid asking for every detail at this stage.
- Second listening: provide a focused task, such as completing a chart, identifying reasons, sequencing events, or noting key information. Learners may take brief notes.
- Targeted replay: replay only the segment related to a particular question. Encourage learners to identify the sounds or expressions that caused difficulty.
- Caption-supported checking: where appropriate, show captions or a transcript so learners can confirm selected information and notice the relationship between spoken and written forms.
- Post-listening: ask learners to summarise, discuss, respond to the content, or use relevant expressions in a speaking or writing task.
- Reflection: invite learners to evaluate their comprehension and the strategies they used.

This framework combines authentic input with a clear sequence of support. It also allows teachers to adjust the amount of scaffolding according to learner proficiency. Beginners may need shorter clips and more contextual support, while more advanced learners can work with longer recordings, unfamiliar accents, and tasks involving inference or speaker attitude.

5.6. Implications for teachers and learners

For teachers, the main implication is that technology should serve learning objectives. A teacher does not need expensive equipment to use authentic multimedia; short online recordings, audio interviews, or accessible video clips may be sufficient. What matters is the quality of the task and the way the resource is integrated into instruction. Teachers should also consider copyright and platform conditions when downloading or sharing materials.

For learners, authentic multimedia can provide opportunities for repeated exposure to

spoken English outside the classroom. However, independent practice should be purposeful. Learners can keep a listening log, record unfamiliar expressions, summarise short clips, and reflect on comprehension. They should gradually learn to tolerate some uncertainty rather than stopping whenever they miss a word.

5.7. Limitations and directions for further research

This article is based on a selected set of 20 sources and does not report original classroom data. It does not establish a causal effect size for multimedia-based listening instruction. The works reviewed differ in their contexts, research questions, and publication dates, and therefore cannot be treated as a single uniform body of experimental evidence. Future empirical research could compare different forms of multimedia support, such as audio-only input, video without captions, and captioned video, while controlling for learner proficiency and task difficulty.

Further studies could also examine whether learners transfer strategies practised with multimedia to unfamiliar audio-only contexts. Research involving different age groups, proficiency levels, and educational settings would help clarify which combinations of authentic materials and metacognitive instruction are most effective.

6. CONCLUSION

This article has examined the role of authentic multimedia in teaching listening skills to EFL learners through a qualitative synthesis of selected literature. The reviewed works show that listening is an active process involving sound recognition, interpretation, contextual knowledge, and strategic regulation. Learners may face difficulties with rapid speech, connected speech, unfamiliar vocabulary, accents, and the temporary nature of spoken input.

Authentic multimedia can provide valuable exposure to real-world language and may support comprehension through contextual visuals, captions, and opportunities for targeted replay. Nevertheless, multimedia should not be regarded as automatically effective. Materials need to be selected according to learner proficiency and lesson objectives, and visual or written support should be used in ways that do not distract learners from listening.

The literature also highlights the importance of metacognitive instruction. Planning, monitoring, and evaluating can help learners approach listening tasks more strategically and develop greater independence. A structured lesson that includes pre-listening preparation, global listening, focused listening, selective replay, caption-supported checking, post-listening response, and reflection offers a practical way to integrate authentic multimedia into EFL instruction.

In conclusion, authentic multimedia is best understood as a pedagogical resource

whose effectiveness depends on thoughtful selection, purposeful tasks, and appropriate teacher guidance. Further classroom-based research is needed to examine its impact across different learner groups and instructional contexts.

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