

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE SKILLS: LISTENING AND READING

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Abstract

Receptive skills, namely listening and reading, are foundational in second language acquisition, as they enable learners to comprehend and process input before producing language. This paper investigates effective instructional strategies to develop these skills at intermediate to advanced proficiency levels. Through a combination of authentic materials, task-based activities, and metacognitive scaffolding, learners can improve comprehension accuracy, vocabulary range, and learner autonomy. A qualitative study was conducted with two learner groups over eight weeks, comparing traditional form-focused drills with learner-centered, content-rich approaches. Results demonstrate that authentic, interactive methods yield significantly higher gains in both listening and reading comprehension. Implications for classroom practice and future research are discussed.

Keywords: Receptive skills; listening; reading; authentic materials; task-based learning; learner autonomy.

Introduction

In the process of language learning, receptive skills—listening and reading—serve as the bedrock for communicative competence. Unlike productive skills, which require learners to generate language, receptive skills involve the interpretation of incoming spoken or written input. Mastery of these skills is essential for academic success and effective real-life communication in the target language.

However, many learners struggle to understand natural speech and authentic texts due to limited vocabulary, unfamiliar accents, and complex syntactic structures.



Traditional form-focused approaches often emphasize discrete point drills without situating language in meaningful contexts, leading to low motivation and transfer. Thus, it is imperative to explore strategies that enhance engagement and provide comprehensible input while promoting strategic processing.

This study examines a range of instructional techniques—such as jigsaw listening, extensive reading, prediction tasks, and use of multimedia resources—designed to foster active involvement with language input. By comparing these with conventional methods, we aim to identify practices that significantly improve receptive comprehension and support learner autonomy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Receptive skills have been extensively researched within second language acquisition theory. Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985) posits that learners acquire language when exposed to $i+1$ input—that is, slightly above their current proficiency. Authentic listening and reading materials provide rich, contextualized examples of language use, aligning with this principle.

Extensive reading, as defined by Day and Bamford (1998), involves reading large quantities of text at or slightly below one's comfortable level. Research indicates that this approach accelerates vocabulary acquisition, enhances reading fluency, and fosters positive attitudes toward reading. Similarly, Nation (2009) highlights the role of massive listening exposure—through podcasts, lectures, and media—in expanding auditory vocabulary and improving bottom-up processing skills.

Task-based listening activities, such as jigsaw and information-gap exercises, have been shown to boost learners' ability to infer meaning and predict content (Willis & Willis, 2007). Metacognitive strategies—previewing, predicting, and self-monitoring—equip learners to take greater control of their comprehension process (Vandergrift, 2003).

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative comparative study was conducted with 60 intermediate-level (B1–B2) learners enrolled at a university language center. Participants were randomly assigned to two groups: Group A (traditional) and Group B (innovative). Both groups met three times per week for 90-minute sessions over eight weeks.

Group A engaged in textbook-based reading passages and teacher-led listening drills focusing on discrete grammar and vocabulary points. Group B participated in task-based activities using authentic materials—news articles, poetry readings, podcasts—and employed metacognitive tasks such as prediction charts, peer discussions, and reflection journals. Pre- and post-tests measured comprehension gains, while classroom observations and learner journals provided qualitative insights.

DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis revealed that learner-centered methodologies significantly outperformed traditional drills. Group B learners displayed greater engagement, strategic processing, and confidence when interacting with authentic texts. The integration of multimedia resources facilitated multimodal input, catering to diverse learning preferences and reinforcing comprehension through visual and auditory channels.

Additionally, reflection journals indicated that metacognitive tasks fostered deeper awareness of comprehension strategies, enabling learners to self-regulate and adapt techniques across contexts. These findings underscore the importance of scaffolding and strategy instruction as integral components of receptive skills development.

RESULTS

Group B outperformed Group A markedly. Listening comprehension in Group B increased by 28% on average, compared to 11% in Group A. Reading comprehension gains were 33% for Group B versus 15% for Group A.

Observation data revealed higher engagement among Group B learners, who demonstrated improved inferencing skills, faster decoding speeds, and more strategic use of prediction and note-taking. Journal entries indicated enhanced motivation and confidence when dealing with real-world texts.

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