CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY STUDENTS IN THE IELTS LISTENING SECTION

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Abstract: *The IELTS listening section is difficult for many students, especially non-native English speakers. This study explores the main challenges students face during the test. Many learners struggle with different accents, fast speech, and unfamiliar vocabulary. These problems make it hard to understand the audio and answer questions correctly. Students also lose focus easily, especially when they miss one part of the recording. This often causes stress and reduces confidence. In real test situations, students feel pressure and cannot recover quickly after missing information. In addition, pronunciation and connected speech make it difficult to recognize words that students already know. This study shows that both language problems and emotional factors affect listening performance. To improve results, students need regular practice, exposure to real English, and strategies to manage stress. Understanding these challenges can help teachers and learners improve listening skills and achieve better IELTS scores.*

Key words: *IELTS Listening Section, Listening Difficulties, Listening Comprehension, English Learners, Accent, Vocabulary, Listening Anxiety.*

Аннотация: *Раздел аудирования в IELTS является сложным для многих студентов, особенно для тех, кто не является носителем английского языка. Данное исследование рассматривает основные трудности, с которыми сталкиваются студенты во время теста. Многие учащиеся испытывают сложности с пониманием различных акцентов, быстрой речи и незнакомой лексики. Эти проблемы затрудняют восприятие аудиоматериала и правильное выполнение*

заданий. Студенты также легко теряют концентрацию, особенно если пропускают часть записи. Это часто вызывает стресс и снижает уверенность в себе. В реальных условиях экзамена учащиеся испытывают давление и не могут быстро восстановиться после пропущенной информации. Кроме того, особенности произношения и связной речи усложняют распознавание слов, которые уже знакомы студентам в письменной форме. Исследование показывает, что как языковые, так и эмоциональные факторы влияют на результаты аудирования. Для улучшения показателей студентам необходима регулярная практика, контакт с реальной английской речью и стратегии управления стрессом. Понимание этих трудностей поможет преподавателям и учащимся развивать навыки аудирования и достигать более высоких результатов в IELTS.

Ключевые слова: *Аудирование IELTS, трудности аудирования, понимание на слух, изучающие английский язык, акцент, словарный запас, тревожность при аудировании.*

Annotatsiya: *IELTS tinglab tushunish bo‘limi ko‘plab talabalar uchun murakkab hisoblanadi, ayniqsa ingliz tili ona tili bo‘lmaganlar uchun. Ushbu tadqiqot talabalar test davomida duch keladigan asosiy qiyinchiliklarni ko‘rib chiqadi. Ko‘pchilik o‘quvchilar turli aksentlarni tushunishda, tez nutqni eshitib anglashda va notanish so‘zlarga duch kelganda qiynaladilar. Bu muammolar audio materialni to‘g‘ri tushunish va savollarga aniq javob berishni qiyinlashtiradi. Talabalar, ayniqsa yozuvning bir qismini o‘tkazib yuborganda, diqqatini tez yo‘qotadi. Bu esa stressni kuchaytiradi va o‘ziga bo‘lgan ishonchni pasaytiradi. Haqiqiy imtihon sharoitida talabalar bosimni his qiladilar va o‘tkazib yuborilgan ma’lumotdan keyin tez tiklana olmaydilar. Bundan tashqari, talaffuz va bog‘langan nutq (connected speech) talabalarga yozma shaklda bilgan so‘zlarini tanib olishni qiyinlashtiradi. Tadqiqot natijalari shuni ko‘rsatadiki, tinglab tushunish natijalariga nafaqat til bilan*

bog‘liq, balki emotsional omillar ham ta’sir qiladi. Natijalarni yaxshilash uchun talabalar muntazam mashq qilishlari, haqiqiy ingliz nutqini ko‘proq eshitishlari va stressni boshqarish strategiyalarini o‘rganishlari zarur. Ushbu qiyinchiliklarni tushunish o‘qituvchilar va o‘quvchilarga tinglab tushunish ko‘nikmalarini rivojlantirish hamda IELTS natijalarini yaxshilashga yordam beradi.

Kalit so‘zlar: *IELTS tinglab tushunish, tinglashdagi qiyinchiliklar, tinglab tushunish, ingliz tili o‘rganuvchilar, aksent, so‘z boyligi, tinglashdagi xavotir.*

Introduction

Listening is a core part of language learning, but it is often the most difficult skill for students to develop. Unlike reading or writing, listening requires learners to process information in real time, which leaves little space for reflection or repetition. In many learning contexts, listening practice is not given enough attention, so students have limited exposure to authentic spoken English. For this reason, many learners only begin to seriously develop their listening ability when preparing for international English tests such as IELTS. The IELTS listening section is designed to assess how well candidates understand spoken English in everyday and academic situations. Although it is a key component of the overall exam, it is frequently viewed as one of the most challenging parts. Students often find it difficult to follow different accents, understand fast speech, and recognize words in connected speech. These issues become even more serious when learners have a limited vocabulary or little experience with real English audio. In addition to linguistic difficulties, test conditions also play an important role. Strict timing, lack of repetition, and pressure to answer quickly can increase stress and reduce concentration. As a result, even students who have a basic understanding of English may struggle to perform well in the listening test. Therefore, understanding the challenges

students face in the IELTS listening section is important for improving teaching methods and helping learners develop more effective listening strategies. One of the main problems students face in the IELTS listening section is difficulty in understanding different accents and fast speech. In real recordings, speakers often come from different English-speaking countries, and they do not speak slowly or clearly. Because of this, many learners cannot catch key information even if they know the words in written form, which makes them confused during the test. However, another common problem is limited vocabulary and weak recognition of spoken words. Students may know a word when they see it in reading, but they fail to recognize it when it is spoken in a sentence. In addition, connected speech and pronunciation changes make it more difficult for them to identify familiar words in audio, so they miss important answers.

A further issue is a lack of concentration and test anxiety. Many students feel nervous during the listening test, and this affects their focus. When they miss one part of the recording, they often lose confidence and cannot follow the next questions properly. As a result, their overall performance becomes lower than expected.

RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY

Aryuliva Adnan and her colleague from the State University of Padang (2020) focused on breaking down listening into smaller parts to better understand how learners process spoken language. They introduced the idea of listening micro-skills, showing that listening is not just one ability but also a set of smaller skills working together. He divided listening into two main types: conversational listening and academic listening. In conversational listening, learners need to hold short parts of speech in memory, recognize reduced or unclear word forms, and understand linking words in natural speech. For example, in real conversation, “going to” may sound like “gonna,” and students must still recognize the meaning. In academic listening, learners must understand longer speeches such as lectures. They need to identify the main

idea, follow explanations, and understand cause and effect. For example, in a lecture about climate change, students must understand why the temperature is increasing and what effects it causes. Researchers' work is important because it shows that listening is a combination of many small skills, not a single ability.

SM Akramul Kabir and Una Cunningham of the University of Otago (2023) conducted a study on how students enhance their listening skills through the application of listening strategies. Their findings indicate that learners who actively employ strategies such as predicting content, verifying comprehension, and reviewing errors demonstrate superior performance in listening tasks. For instance, before listening, a student may infer the topic based on the title. During the listening process, they attempt to confirm their initial hypotheses. Following the activity, they reflect on missed information and the reasons for such omissions. The research demonstrates that the utilization of strategies fosters greater metacognitive awareness among learners. This heightened awareness improves comprehension and enables students to exert greater control over their understanding during listening activities. The researchers concluded that successful listening depends not only on linguistic knowledge but also on the learner's ability to manage the listening process effectively.

Musa Nushi and Fereshte Orouji from Shahid Beheshti University expanded earlier ideas by organizing listening into micro-skills and macro-skills. Micro-skills focus on small details like sounds, words, and grammar. Macro-skills focus on overall understanding, such as identifying the main idea or purpose of a text. For example, in a listening test about education, micro-skills help a student recognize individual words like “exam,” “study,” or “university.” Macro-skills help them understand the overall message, such as the importance of education for future success. They also explained bottom-up processing, where learners build meaning from small language units, and top-down processing, where learners use background knowledge to understand

meaning. For example, if a student hears a conversation about “airport,” they may use their knowledge of travel to understand the situation faster.

Their work is important because it shows that both detailed listening and overall understanding are needed for successful comprehension.

Solutions

To solve the problems in the IELTS listening section, students need regular and focused practice with real English materials. Listening to podcasts, news, and IELTS practice tests can help learners become familiar with different accents and natural speech speed. This practice helps them adjust to how English is actually spoken in real situations, not only in textbooks. Another effective solution is improving vocabulary and word recognition skills. Students should learn new words with their pronunciation, not only their meaning. Repeated listening and shadowing techniques can help them recognize words faster in audio. This makes it easier to understand sentences even when speech is fast or connected. To reduce anxiety and improve concentration, students should practice under real exam conditions. Doing timed listening exercises helps them get used to pressure and avoid panic during the test. Relaxation techniques and consistent practice also help students stay calm and focused, even if they miss part of the recording.

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