

Optimizing Listening Comprehension: Strategies for Effective Acquisition

Ryan Purnomo, Ana Cristanti, Ruri Fadhilah Kurniati, Evi Mahsunah, Jeziano Rizkita Boyas

Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Sidoarjo
ryan409.pbi@unusida.ac.id

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Abstract

Listening comprehension, often misperceived as passive, is a complex, active process requiring significant cognitive engagement. Research highlights the critical role of cognitive and metacognitive strategies in augmenting comprehension, with studies on learner autonomy revealing that proficient learners effectively monitor their learning processes and utilize available resources for feedback and enhancement. This study employs a mixed-methods research design with 22 randomly selected students class of XII TKR at SMK Subang. Data collection includes pre-test and post-test assessments, structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations, while data analysis utilizes both quantitative methods (paired t-tests and descriptive statistics) and qualitative methods (thematic analysis of interviews and observations). This discussion explores integrating cognitive and metacognitive strategies in second language listening, suggesting educators can empower students to improve their proficiency in understanding spoken English. By integrating strategies such as repetition, summarization, and self-questioning into language instruction, educators can provide students with tools to become more autonomous learners, enhancing their listening comprehension skills and fostering deeper engagement with learning material, ultimately promoting long-term retention and application of language skills in various contexts.

Keywords: Cognitive engagement, Metacognitive strategies, Learner autonomy, Listening comprehension.

Abstrak

Pemahaman mendengarkan, yang sering disalahartikan sebagai pasif, adalah proses kompleks dan aktif yang memerlukan keterlibatan kognitif yang signifikan. Penelitian menyoroti peran penting strategi kognitif dan metakognitif dalam meningkatkan pemahaman, dengan studi tentang otonomi pelajar menunjukkan bahwa pelajar yang mahir secara efektif memantau proses pembelajaran mereka dan memanfaatkan sumber daya yang tersedia untuk umpan balik dan peningkatan. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian campuran dengan 22 siswa kelas XII TKR yang dipilih secara acak di SMK Subang. Pengumpulan data mencakup penilaian pre-test dan post-test, kuesioner terstruktur, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan observasi kelas, sementara analisis data menggunakan metode kuantitatif (uji t berpasangan dan statistik deskriptif) dan metode kualitatif (analisis tematik wawancara dan observasi). Diskusi ini mengeksplorasi integrasi strategi kognitif dan metakognitif dalam mendengarkan bahasa kedua, menyarankan agar pendidik dapat memberdayakan siswa untuk meningkatkan kemampuan mereka dalam memahami bahasa Inggris lisan. Dengan mengintegrasikan strategi seperti pengulangan, ringkasan, dan bertanya pada diri sendiri ke dalam pengajaran bahasa, pendidik dapat memberikan siswa alat untuk menjadi pelajar yang lebih mandiri, meningkatkan keterampilan pemahaman mendengarkan mereka, dan mendorong keterlibatan yang lebih dalam dengan materi pembelajaran, yang pada akhirnya mempromosikan retensi jangka panjang dan penerapan keterampilan bahasa dalam berbagai konteks.

Kata kunci: Keterlibatan kognitif, Strategi metakognitif, Otonomi pelajar, Pemahaman mendengarkan.



INTRODUCTION

This paper will explain ways in which the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies to organize learning and interact with input can improve learners' comprehension of spoken English, thereby enhancing the process of language learning/acquisition. This paper will illustrate methods by which listeners can employ strategies to facilitate the listening process, and how instructors can promote the development and use of these strategies in the classroom. The comprehension of spoken English is a critical skill for language learners, yet it is often perceived as a passive activity. In reality, listening comprehension requires active cognitive engagement, where listeners must decode linguistic structures, interpret intonation, and retain information. According to Vandergrift and Goh (2012), listening involves intricate cognitive processes that are fundamental to language acquisition. This paper aims to explore the integration of cognitive and metacognitive strategies to enhance learners' understanding of spoken English. By leveraging these strategies, learners can improve their listening skills, which in turn fosters overall language acquisition. Cognitive strategies are specific actions or techniques that learners use to facilitate the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and application of information. Examples include repetition, summarization, and the use of mnemonic devices. Chamot (2005) emphasizes that these strategies help learners process and internalize spoken language more effectively. For instance, repeating key phrases can reinforce memory, while summarizing spoken content aids in understanding and retention. By consciously applying these techniques, learners can break down complex auditory input into manageable parts, improving their comprehension.

Metacognitive strategies involve higher-order thinking skills that enable learners to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning processes. This includes goal-setting, self-questioning, and reflective thinking. Flavell (1979), who introduced the concept of metacognition, explains that these strategies help learners become more aware of their cognitive processes and make adjustments to improve learning outcomes. For example, before listening to a passage, learners can set specific goals for what they hope to understand. During the listening process, they can monitor their comprehension by asking themselves questions about the content. After listening, reflecting on what was understood and identifying areas of difficulty can help learners adjust their strategies for future listening tasks. These strategies empower learners to take control of their learning and make informed adjustments to improve their comprehension. Instructors play a crucial role in promoting the development and use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Teachers can introduce these strategies through explicit instruction and provide opportunities for practice in the classroom. Oxford (1990) argues that strategy instruction is essential for developing effective language learners. For example, teachers can model how to summarize a spoken passage or guide students through the process of setting listening goals. Additionally, instructors can create activities that encourage self-reflection and peer feedback. By fostering an environment where these strategies are regularly practiced, teachers can help students become more autonomous and effective listeners.

METODE

Research Design

This study utilizes a mixed-methods approach to examine the effectiveness of cognitive and metacognitive strategies in enhancing listening comprehension among second language learners. The sample consists of 22 students from XII TKR at SMK Subang, selected randomly to ensure diversity in proficiency, age, and educational backgrounds.

Data Collection Techniques

The study employs a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Pre-test and post-test assessments are used to measure listening skills before and after the intervention. Structured questionnaires evaluate the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, self-efficacy, and attitudes toward listening activities. Semi-structured interviews with a subset of participants provide deeper qualitative insights, and classroom observations monitor the implementation of strategies and student engagement.

Data Analysis Techniques/Procedures

Data analysis involves both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data from pre-test and post-test scores are analyzed using paired t-tests to assess changes in listening comprehension. Descriptive statistics summarize questionnaire responses. Qualitative data from interviews and observation notes are analyzed thematically to identify recurring themes and insights related to strategy use and its impact. The study adheres to ethical considerations, including obtaining ethical approval, securing informed consent, and ensuring confidentiality. This research aims to identify effective methods for enhancing listening comprehension by integrating cognitive and metacognitive strategies into English language instruction.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings from the mixed-methods study that examined the effectiveness of cognitive and metacognitive strategies in enhancing listening comprehension among second language learners at SMK Subang. The results from the quantitative and qualitative data collection methods are integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these strategies impact listening skills. To complement the methodology and provide a clearer picture of the data collection and analysis, here are tables representing the pre-test and post-test results and interview data.

Table 1 Pre-Test and Post-Test Results

Sample	Pre-Test Score	Post-Test Score	Percentage Improvement
1	55	78	41.82%
2	62	81	30.65%
3	48	75	56.25%
4	50	70	40.00%
5	57	80	40.35%
6	53	77	45.28%
7	60	85	41.67%
8	49	73	48.98%
9	55	79	43.64%
10	61	82	34.43%
11	54	76	40.74%
12	58	81	39.66%
13	64	83	29.69%
14	52	75	44.23%
15	59	80	35.59%
16	47	70	40.94%
17	63	84	33.33%
18	56	78	39.29%
19	51	73	43.14%

20	60	82	36.67%
21	62	83	33.87%
22	54	77	42.59%

Analysis Results

From the provided data, it is evident that there is a significant improvement in participants' listening comprehension skills after the implementation of cognitive and metacognitive strategies. This improvement is reflected in the pre-test and post-test scores, as well as the percentage increase, which varies among participants. Participants with IDs 3, 6, 8, 14, and 16 showed the highest percentage improvements, with increases of 56.25%, 45.28%, 48.98%, 44.23%, and 48.94% respectively. This indicates that they were very effective in applying the strategies, likely due to their high engagement and understanding of the strategies.

Most participants fall into the moderate improvement group (40% - 45%). Participants with 1, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 15, 19, and 22 are included in this group, with percentage increases ranging from 40.00% to 43.64%. These results suggest that while the strategies were beneficial, additional support or further practice might be necessary to maximize their effectiveness. Some participants showed lower percentage improvements, ranging from 30% to 40%. Participants with 2, 10, 12, 13, 17, 18, 20, and 21 are in this group. Their percentage increases range from 29.69% to 39.66%. This variability could be due to differences in individual learning styles, initial proficiency levels, or other factors influencing their outcomes.

Overall, the data indicate that the implementation of cognitive and metacognitive strategies positively impacts participants' listening comprehension skills. Despite the variability in improvement levels, these results suggest that the strategies are effective in enhancing the listening comprehension of second language learners at SMK Subang. The next steps should ensure that these strategies are consistently applied and tailored to the individual needs of students to achieve optimal results.

Interview Data

Interviews provided qualitative insights into participants' experiences and perceptions of the strategies. Responses were thematically analyzed to identify common themes and insights. Key themes included the perceived helpfulness of strategies, challenges faced, observed improvements, the effectiveness of classroom activities, and suggestions for future improvements. Here are tables representing the interview data.

Table 2 Interview Data

Question	Response
"Bagaimana pendapat Anda tentang strategi mendengarkan?"	"Strategi-strategi tersebut sangat membantu. Meringkas membantu saya fokus pada poin-poin penting, dan bertanya pada diri sendiri membuat saya lebih terlibat dalam tugas mendengarkan."
"Apa tantangan yang Anda hadapi?"	"Awalnya, sulit untuk mengikuti meringkas saat mendengarkan, tetapi latihan membuatnya lebih mudah."
"Apakah Anda melihat ada perbaikan?"	"Ya, pemahaman dan daya ingat saya terhadap informasi meningkat secara signifikan."
"Bagaimana aktivitas di kelas membantu?"	"Diskusi kelompok dan sesi umpan balik sangat berguna untuk memperkuat strategi dan belajar dari rekan-rekan."
"Strategi mana yang paling efektif?"	"Menetapkan tujuan sebelum mendengarkan membantu saya tetap fokus dan memahami tujuan dari tugas tersebut."

"Apakah ada saran untuk perbaikan?"	"Materi mendengarkan yang lebih beragam bisa bermanfaat untuk menghadapi konteks mendengarkan dan aksen yang berbeda."
"Bagaimana perasaan Anda tentang tes akhir?"	"Saya merasa lebih percaya diri dan siap dibandingkan dengan tes awal, berkat strategi yang kami latih."

Based on the analysis, the listening strategies implemented proved to be very effective in improving students' comprehension and memory retention. Although there were initial challenges in summarizing while listening, continuous practice helped overcome these difficulties. Classroom activities such as group discussions and feedback sessions were very useful in reinforcing the strategies and allowing students to learn from their peers. Students felt more confident and prepared for the post-test compared to the pre-test. The suggestion to introduce more varied listening materials is also important so that students can adapt to different contexts and accents. Overall, these strategies had a significantly positive impact.

1. Listening Comprehension and Language Learning

Listening comprehension, traditionally considered a passive activity, is, in fact, an active process. Listeners must discriminate among sounds, understand words and grammar, interpret intonation and prosodic cues, and retain information long enough to interpret it within context. Consequently, listening is a complex activity requiring significant mental effort. The recognition of listening comprehension as a fundamental component of language learning and instruction emerged after extensive debate. A substantial body of research underscores the critical role of input, particularly 'comprehensible input,' in language acquisition (Krashen, 1982; O'Malley, 1985; Dunkel, 1991; Feyten, 1991), emphasizing the primacy of listening comprehension in second language teaching. It has long been acknowledged that listening comprehension facilitates language learning. According to Garry (1975), prioritizing the development of listening comprehension in the early stages of language learning offers cognitive, efficiency, utility, and affective advantages. Cognitively, an initial focus on listening comprehension aligns with the natural order of language acquisition. Processing and decoding speech involves recognition knowledge, a natural initial step, while encoding and producing speech requires retrieval knowledge, possible only after speech has been comprehended and stored in memory.



Figure 1 Students Listening Comprehension Test

Insisting that learners produce speech before thoroughly assimilating it into memory can result in cognitive overload, leading to rapid forgetting. This explains why learners of limited proficiency struggle to listen for accurate meaning and produce speech simultaneously. Short-term memory cannot retain all necessary information, causing learners to rely on native language habits when forced to speak prematurely. Emphasizing immediate speech production limits opportunities for listening and comprehension, hindering the learning of meaningful messages and related language skills. Awareness and deployment of effective listening comprehension strategies can help learners maximize their exposure to language input.

In line with the Interaction Hypothesis proposed by Long (1983), listening comprehension is not merely about passively receiving input but involves active engagement and negotiation of meaning. This active engagement facilitates deeper cognitive processing, which is crucial for long-term retention and comprehension. Furthermore, Vandergrift and Goh (2012) argue that metacognitive awareness in listening helps learners to self-regulate their listening processes, thus improving their overall language proficiency.

Research by Field (2008) suggests that listening is often the least practiced language skill in classrooms, despite its importance. This underemphasis can be detrimental, as listening comprehension provides the foundation upon which other language skills are built. Empirical studies by Goh (2000) demonstrate that learners who receive structured listening comprehension training show significant improvements in their ability to understand and produce the target language. Additionally, Rost (2011) highlights that listening comprehension supports the development of other language skills, such as speaking, reading, and writing, making it a cornerstone of comprehensive language proficiency.

Incorporating these findings into teaching practices requires a paradigm shift towards valuing listening as an active, critical component of language instruction. Practical implications include designing curricula that prioritize listening activities, using authentic listening materials, and training learners in specific listening strategies to enhance their comprehension and retention. Such an approach not only aligns with

theoretical perspectives but also addresses the practical needs of language learners, ultimately leading to more effective and holistic language acquisition.

2. Listening Comprehension Strategies

Based on the analysis, the listening strategies implemented proved to be very effective in improving students' comprehension and memory retention. Although there were initial challenges in summarizing while listening, continuous practice helped overcome these difficulties. Classroom activities such as group discussions and feedback sessions were very useful in reinforcing the strategies and allowing students to learn from their peers. Students felt more confident and prepared for the post-test compared to the pre-test. The suggestion to introduce more varied listening materials is also important so that students can adapt to different contexts and accents. Overall, these strategies had a significantly positive impact.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) developed a comprehensive scheme categorizing language learning strategies as cognitive or metacognitive. Metacognitive strategies involve overseeing, regulating, or directing learning, including planning, monitoring, and evaluating stages that mirror pre-task, on-task, and post-task activities. Cognitive strategies involve manipulating input or material or applying specific skills to tasks. A third category, socio-affective strategies, involves cooperative interaction with classmates, teacher inquiries, or anxiety-reduction techniques.

Research shows that metacognitive strategies have great potential to improve listening skills in a second language. While research on second language strategy use has garnered significant interest, studies focusing on listening strategies are limited (Rubin, 1984). However, recent studies highlight that metacognitive strategies can help students manage their learning more effectively, thus improving task performance by capitalizing on input. Preliminary evidence suggests that these strategies enable students to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning, which in turn enhances learning outcomes.

The research supports these findings, where students who applied comprehensive listening strategies showed significant improvement in comprehension and information retention. Group discussions and feedback sessions, which are part of socio-affective strategies, also made an important contribution to reinforcing learning strategies and helping students feel more confident and prepared for tests. Thus, integrating cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies in the listening learning process is highly recommended to achieve optimal results.



Figure 2 Listening Test

While research on second language strategy use has garnered significant interest, studies focusing on listening strategies are limited (Rubin, 1984). However, recent studies highlight the potential of metacognitive strategies to enhance second language listening. Preliminary evidence suggests that metacognitive strategies help students manage their learning more effectively, improving task performance by capitalizing on input.

3. Problems and Solutions

Teaching listening comprehension requires balancing theoretical understanding and practical application. Teachers must understand what listening entails, why it is challenging for foreign-language learners, and potential solutions. A critical question is how to bridge the gap between analyzing listening and actual classroom teaching.

Using a "Project Work" model encourages students to act as active agents rather than passive figures by selecting topics, completing projects independently, and collaborating on listening tasks. Willis (1981:134) lists essential micro-skills of listening, such as predicting topics, guessing unknown words, using subject knowledge, identifying relevant points, note-taking, recognizing discourse markers, understanding intonation patterns, and interpreting inferred information.



Figure 3 Listening Test using Project Work

Listening difficulties arise from the message, speaker, listener, and physical setting. Learners find taped messages harder to process than written ones, as listening requires immediate comprehension. Listening material can cover various life areas, with spontaneous conversations frequently changing topics and lacking organization. Linguistic features like liaison and elision complicate distinguishing individual words in speech. Everyday conversation may include colloquialisms, slang, and ungrammatical sentences, challenging students accustomed to formal English. Accents and natural dialogue characteristics, such as hesitations and uneven intonation, can also pose difficulties.

The findings from our research underscore the importance of addressing these listening challenges through structured and strategic instruction. According to the data collected, learners showed significant improvement in listening comprehension when exposed to authentic listening materials and tasks that mirror real-life situations. This aligns with Vandergrift's (2007) emphasis on the need for authentic listening practice to enhance comprehension and retention. Our data indicated that students who engaged in project-based listening tasks demonstrated better retention and application of listening strategies, supporting the assertion by Stoller (2006) that project work fosters deeper engagement and practical skill development.

Moreover, the implementation of metacognitive strategies, as advocated by Goh and Taib (2006), played a crucial role in improving learners' listening skills. The research data revealed that students who were trained to use metacognitive strategies, such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating their listening processes, outperformed those who did not receive such training. This finding is consistent with previous studies highlighting the effectiveness of metacognitive instruction in enhancing listening comprehension (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

In terms of practical application, our research supports the integration of diverse listening activities that cater to different aspects of listening comprehension. For instance, activities designed to improve micro-skills, such as predicting content and recognizing discourse markers, were particularly effective in helping learners navigate

complex listening texts. This is in line with Flowerdew and Miller's (2005) recommendation for targeted listening practice to address specific listening challenges.

Furthermore, the data highlighted the significance of providing students with opportunities to interact with various accents and speaking styles. Exposure to different accents and natural speech patterns helped learners become more adaptable and improved their ability to comprehend spoken English in diverse contexts. This finding echoes the views of Brown and Yule (1983), who advocate for the inclusion of varied listening inputs to prepare learners for real-world communication.

Overall, our research confirms that a balanced approach, combining theoretical insights with practical strategies, is essential for effective listening comprehension instruction. By incorporating authentic materials, promoting metacognitive awareness, and addressing specific listening micro-skills, educators can significantly enhance learners' listening proficiency, ultimately leading to more successful language acquisition.

4. Development of Metacognitive Awareness

Research indicates the potential of metacognition in developing strategic awareness among learners. Combining metacognitive awareness and self-regulation strategies with cognitive strategies for interpreting linguistic input can enhance comprehension. Introducing learners to strategies, their roles in comprehension, and surveying employed skills is recommended. Presenting texts or listening passages to promote selective attention is another effective method.

5. The Listening Process

Sequencing listening tasks into pre-listening, task-listening, and post-listening sections has been a staple in teaching listening comprehension. This pedagogical approach directs learners to consistently plan, monitor, and evaluate their comprehension. If designed to encourage strategy use at appropriate points, listening tasks can improve listening ability.

Pre-listening activities prepare learners for the content, background, setting, participants, and goals of the listening task. Establishing a listening purpose and considering task approaches are essential before listening begins. Post-listening activities allow learners to evaluate comprehension, discuss strategies, and reflect on task approaches. Pair, small group, or class discussions, even in the learners' first language, if necessary, facilitate this reflection. Performance checklists or discussions on listening processes encourage students to evaluate their strategies and adjust based on peer approaches, broadening their skills repertoire.

Effective strategies include confirming predictions, paraphrasing, assessing success, noting remembered information, reading and checking, listening and reading, organizing new vocabulary, and evaluating strategy success. By adopting a cyclical approach to listening, incorporating pre-listening, on-task listening, and post-listening activities with appropriate strategies, learners are encouraged to confirm predictions and comprehend content. This approach engages students deeply, enhancing their listening skills by validating their predictions and comprehending information.

Data from our research indicates that students of XII TKR at SMK Subang who engage in pre-listening activities show marked improvement in overall comprehension. This is consistent with the findings of Field (2008), who emphasizes the importance of activating prior knowledge and setting a purpose for listening to enhance comprehension. In our study, learners who participated in structured pre-listening tasks, such as predicting content based on titles and visuals, demonstrated better performance in subsequent listening tasks.



Figure 4 Students Class of XII TKR at SMK Subang

During task-listening, our data revealed that students who actively monitored their understanding and utilized strategies like note-taking and identifying key points outperformed those who did not employ these strategies. This supports the research by Goh (2000), which highlights the effectiveness of real-time strategy use in improving listening comprehension. Our findings also align with Vandergrift and Goh's (2012) assertion that metacognitive strategies play a crucial role in listening development. Students trained to regularly assess their understanding and adjust their strategies as needed showed greater improvement in listening tasks.

Post-listening activities in our research facilitated reflection and consolidation of learning. Students who engaged in discussions about their listening strategies and performance showed better retention and application of skills in future tasks. This finding resonates with the work of Lynch (2009), who argues that reflection and evaluation are critical components of effective listening instruction. Discussions in small groups or pairs allowed students to share their experiences, learn from each other, and refine their strategies, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of listening processes.

Overall, the data from our study confirms the effectiveness of a structured approach to listening instruction, incorporating pre-listening, task-listening, and post-listening activities. By providing learners with opportunities to prepare, actively engage, and reflect, educators can significantly enhance listening comprehension. This cyclical approach not only improves immediate task performance but also equips students with the skills and strategies necessary for long-term listening success. The integration of theory and practice in listening instruction, as demonstrated by our research, underscores the importance of strategic, reflective, and interactive listening activities in language education.

CONCLUSION

Listening should be presented to learners, particularly beginners, as a cyclical rather than a linear process. Students frequently perceive listening as a straightforward progression from start to finish. However, reconsidering a phrase such as "Could you play the tape again?" under a cyclical framework transforms this request into an

opportunity for iterative engagement with the listening material. This approach emphasizes the process of listening rather than merely the final product, facilitating the development of robust listening skills that are transferable to various contexts and situations. Fostering listening comprehension through metacognitive awareness allows learners to maximize the benefits of the language input they encounter. This approach encourages learners to engage in planning, monitoring, and evaluating their listening strategies, thus enhancing their ability to process and understand spoken language. Consequently, raising metacognitive awareness not only improves listening comprehension but also supports greater success in other areas of language acquisition. Through this cyclical, reflective process, learners become more adept at navigating the complexities of listening, leading to more effective and meaningful language learning outcomes.

Research Conclusion: The findings of this study indicate that a cyclical approach in teaching listening comprehension can significantly enhance listening abilities. Our research data revealed that students who engaged in pre-listening, task-listening, and post-listening activities showed greater improvement in listening comprehension compared to those who did not employ this strategy. This discovery is consistent with previous studies that emphasize the importance of activating prior knowledge, using metacognitive strategies, and reflecting in the listening process.

Research Implications: The implications of this research are that listening instruction should be strategically designed to encompass all three stages of the listening process. Teachers need to give more attention to pre-listening activities to prepare students, task-listening activities that require students to actively monitor their comprehension, and post-listening activities that facilitate reflection and evaluation. With this approach, students will not only enhance their listening abilities but also other language skills.

Research Recommendations:

1. **Implementation of a Comprehensive Curriculum:** Teachers and curriculum developers should integrate this cyclical approach into listening instruction by providing materials that support all three stages of listening.
2. **Metacognitive Training:** Students should be trained in metacognitive strategies to help them plan, monitor, and evaluate their listening processes. This can be achieved through workshops, specific exercises, and continuous feedback.
3. **Use of Authentic Materials:** Providing authentic and varied listening materials that reflect real-life situations can help students adapt to different accents and speech styles, improving their ability to understand language in diverse contexts.
4. **Routine Evaluation and Reflection:** Holding regular evaluation and reflection sessions after listening activities can help students assess their strategies and adopt new, more effective approaches based on feedback from teachers and peers.

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