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LISTENING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES IN ACQUIRING GERMAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE. ANALYSIS OF THE TEXTBOOK "SCHRITTE INTERNATIONAL NEU A2"

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ABSTRACT

This study shows that listening comprehension is very important in both first language acquisition and foreign language learning. Nevertheless, listening receives little attention in foreign language teaching, so it is rarely trained. Listening is a skill we possess from birth and is not learned through social interaction. While listening is a physical process, understanding is a mental one that involves attention, perception, and interpretation. In our first language, listening and understanding pose no difficulties. Here, we can grasp a statement without understanding every word. We use our prior knowledge and predictions to do so. Strategies are required to practice listening skills. These are used in the native language without realizing it, and learners must then redirect their attention to the foreign language. This paper describes strategies relevant to listening comprehension. The textbook "Schritte International Neu" covers all language levels, from A1 to B2. There are many different types of texts for listening. Listening strategies are addressed throughout the textbook and practiced through various tasks. The strategies are repeated after a few tasks and are also combined with each other. However, not all strategies known in the specialist literature are used in the textbook.

Keywords: first language acquisition, foreign language learning, listening comprehension, foreign language didactics.

INTRODUCTION

Languages and foreign languages are central elements of human communication. Without language acquisition, the coexistence of people from different backgrounds and a functioning society and economy would be unthinkable. Listening comprehension therefore plays a very important role in every person's life. Listening is active all day long, be it on the street, on the bus, or at work. Reading and writing play a much smaller role in this. This paper shows how listening comprehension works in foreign language classes and how it can be supported. Various exercises are analysed and their comprehension strategies are determined, because comprehension strategies serve to improve the ability to deal with listening texts. The aim is to examine those comprehension strategies that have already been the subject of academic and literary works and how they affect the development of listening comprehension. In addition, their teaching in foreign language classes and their implementation by students will be addressed. The analysis of the textbook "Schritte International Neu" for German as a Foreign Language (DaF) is intended to demonstrate how the listening comprehension strategies presented in the theoretical section of this paper are represented and taught. The textbook is examined and evaluated based on a list of criteria. The main component of the paper, however, is the theoretical section, which begins by describing the fundamentals of listening comprehension—i.e., the sub-processes and learning objectives. The teaching methods are then listed and discussed one after the other. The listening styles are divided into groups and analysed, and the exercise types are described. This is followed by an analysis of the selected DaF textbook. The objectives and methods of the textbook analysis are first presented. A brief justification for the selection of the textbook is also provided. This is followed by a summary and a tabular overview of the results. A comprehensive conclusion concludes this paper

FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Language acquisition is the process of learning a language. A distinction must be made between first language acquisition (acquisition of one's native language) and second and foreign language acquisition. Foreign language acquisition, unlike second language acquisition, does not serve the purpose of everyday communication. In the latter case, a distinction is made between natural and guided second language acquisition. Guided second language acquisition refers to school-based or institutionalized language instruction (foreign language instruction), whereas natural second language acquisition refers to learning a language without instruction from teachers in schools or courses. Several researchers avoid the distinction between foreign language and second language, arguing that the mechanisms of acquisition are the same. The difference between first language acquisition and foreign language acquisition arises from the distinction between acquisition and learning. Language acquisition occurs naturally, not through controlled communication as in a classroom context. Language acquisition occurs through simple activities such as playing games, reading picture books, or even eating. According to Apeltauer (Apeltauer, 2001, p. 677), language learning "occurs under classroom conditions. It requires full attention. Therefore, the term foreign language learning is used instead of foreign language acquisition." Anderson and Lynch (Anderson & Lynch, 1988, p. 16) believe that the relationship between listeners and speakers must be clarified before any listening exercise.

THE LISTENING STYLES

"We only hear what we want to hear." This initially surprising sentence illustrates that any process of understanding requires an intention. Barbara Dahlhaus (Dahlhaus, 2007, pp. 125-126) illustrates this with an example:

„Just think of the radio in the morning, playing unnoticed in the background until the weather report comes on and you listen carefully to whether you need to pack your umbrella or sunglasses. Your intention to understand ("Do I need an umbrella today?") and, of course, the type of text mean that you listen as extensively as possible, but only as intensely as necessary. "We never hear and understand everything that reaches our ears. Our expectations about the nature and content of the text determine whether we listen at all, and if so, how we listen."

This is no different in foreign language teaching and therefore requires a very specific approach to dealing with audio texts. This involves deliberately employing different listening styles—that is, different approaches to audio texts.

“There are four components that interact in text comprehension: 1. the speaker/producer, who has certain goals, abilities, and assumptions; 2. the listener/addressee with his or her expectations, abilities, and assumptions; 3. the conditions of communication, especially the shared knowledge of the partners; and finally, 4. the text with its specific structure.” (Heringer, 1984, p. 13)

Global Listening Comprehension

According to Eggers (Eggers, 1996, p. 13), global listening comprehension involves recognizing characters, "listening in" to an audio text to understand key words or gain insight into the text structure, grasping the situation, and identifying the macrostructure of the text, the overall message, and key terms. "Listening comprehension must be specifically trained and practiced, not just constantly tested, because where listening comprehension is not practiced, nothing is learned." (Bimmel, 1992, p. 4) "Typical listening exercises can be classified into phases: exercises before, during, and after listening." (Dahlhaus, 2007, p. 126)

Selective listening

Finally, with selective listening, learners focus on individual, relevant pieces of information in the text, such as places, specific names, or numbers. Learners must listen with a focused focus to extract only the relevant information. This is achieved because selective listening is guided by questions about the text and tasks. This skilfully guides the learners' listening interest and expectations.

Selective listening (Selegierend)

"In contrast to selective listening, selective listening (selegierend) occurs based on the listener's individual decisions. Essential parts of the content are to be extracted in order to be able to summarize the text, for example." (Eggers, 1996, p. 46)

Selective listening focuses on specific information based on individual decisions: "We hear what we want to hear, and in doing so, we must distinguish what is relevant from what is irrelevant." Glaboniat (Glaboniat, 1993, pp. 6-7) believes that listening comprehension is an independent, legitimate learning goal, since the average person spends at least 2 to 3 hours a day on "listening comprehension," and foreign language learners should be specifically prepared for everyday life.

Detailed listening

In detailed listening, an entire text is listened to in detail, with learners being encouraged to understand every word as accurately as possible. To achieve this, the text is listened to several times, usually with pauses to allow for further questions. The "detailed

listening comprehension" listening style enables students to identify and understand important details of the text.

Important criteria for determining text difficulty:

- the text length
- the speed of speech (it determines the speed of the comprehension process)
- the number of speakers (Grotjahn & Tesch, 2010, p. 113)

THE TEXTBOOK “SCHRITTE INTERNATIONAL NEU” A2

Concept of the textbook

"Schritte international Neu" is a comprehensive new edition of the textbook "Schritte international." The textbook is available in six volumes, each including the workbook, or optionally in three volumes (the workbook is not included).

Figure 1 illustrates the structure and the assignment to different language levels.

Schritte international Neu 1 Schritte international Neu 2 oder Schritte international Neu 1+2	A1 / Start Deutsch 1
Schritte international Neu 3 Schritte international Neu 4 oder Schritte international Neu 3+4	A2 / Start Deutsch 2, Goethe-Zertifikat A2
Schritte international Neu 5 Schritte international Neu 6 oder Schritte international Neu 5+6	B1 / Zertifikat Deutsch, Goethe-Zertifikat B1

Illustration 1: Structure of the Coursebook

Representation of comprehension strategies in the course book A2.1

The coursebook "Schritte International A2.1 Neu" is divided into two parts: the coursebook and the workbook. Each has seven chapters. After each chapter in the coursebook, there is a break with the "Zwischendurch mal" (In-Between Times) pages. The second part of the book contains the workbook, which also has seven chapters and includes listening exercises. The following section analyzes the listening exercises from the individual lessons of the coursebook and assigns them to specific cognitive strategies and forms of comprehension.

Lesson 1

Exercise 1: "What do you think? What is correct? Listen and compare."

Cognitive Strategy:

Comprehension strategy of prediction: Predicting key content before listening using imagery and activating previously acquired knowledge.

Form of understanding:

Global: Forming an overall picture of objects, people, and actions

Exercise 2: "Which is correct? Listen again and check the boxes."

Comprehension form:

Selective: Filter out the main statements

Exercise 3: "Who lives where? Listen again and match."

Comprehension form:

Selective: Filter out specific information

Lesson 2

Exercise 1: "Look at the photos and read the questions. What do you think? Speak. Then listen and compare."

Cognitive Strategy:

Prediction comprehension strategy: Predicting key statements before listening using visualization and activating previously acquired knowledge.

Comprehension form:

Global: Focus on keywords

Exercise 2: "What is correct? Listen again and check the boxes."

Comprehension form:

Selective: Filter out the main statements

Exercise 3: "Who lives where? Listen again and match."

Comprehension form:

Selective: Filter out specific information

Lesson 3

Exercise 1: "What do you think? What is correct? Check. Listen and compare."

Cognitive Strategy:

Predictive comprehension strategy: Predicting key statements before listening using visuals and activating previously acquired knowledge.

Comprehension form:

Global: Understanding the text globally

Exercise 2: "Who lives where? Listen again and match."

Comprehension form:

Selective: Filtering out specific information

Exercise 3: "What's for dinner? Look at the photos. Then listen and connect."

Cognitive Strategy:

Predictive comprehension strategies: Predicting the content before listening using visuals and activating prior knowledge.

Comprehension form:

Selective: Filtering out specific information

Lesson 4

Exercise 1: "Look at the photos. What do you think? Who is who? Match the names. Listen and compare."

Cognitive Strategies:

Prediction Comprehension Strategy: Predicting key messages before listening using imagery and activating previously acquired knowledge.

Elaboration Strategies: Activating prior knowledge.

Comprehension Form:

Global: Focus on keywords

Exercise 2: "What is correct? Listen again and check the box."

Comprehension Form:

Selective: Filtering out the main messages.

Lesson 5

Exercise 1: "What do you mean? Who says that? Check the box. Listen and compare."

Cognitive Strategy:

Prediction Comprehension Strategy: Predicting key messages before listening using imagery and activating previously acquired knowledge.

Comprehension Form:

Global: Focus on keywords

Exercise 2: "Listen again and correct."

Comprehension Form:

Detailed

Exercise 3: "Complete. Then listen and compare."

Comprehension Form:

Global: Focus on keywords

Exercise 4: "Listen to the conversations and categorize them."

Comprehension Form:

Selective: Filter out the main statements

Lesson 6

Exercise 1: "Look at the photos. What do you think? Speak. Then listen and compare."

Cognitive Strategy

Prediction comprehension strategy: Predicting key statements before listening using visualization and activating previously acquired knowledge.

Comprehension form:

Global: Focus on keywords

Exercise 2: "What is correct? Listen again and check the boxes."

Comprehension form:

Selective: Filter out the main statements

Exercise 3: "Match. Then listen and compare."

Cognitive Strategy:

Elaboration Strategies: Activate prior knowledge.

Comprehension Form:

Global: Focus on keywords

Exercise 4: "What do Felix, Mika, and Valentina say? Listen and check."

Comprehension Form:

Detailed

Exercise 5: "What is correct? Listen again and check."

Comprehension Form:

Selective: Filter out the main statements

Lesson 7

Exercise 1: "Look at the photos. What do you think? Listen and compare."

Cognitive Strategy:

Comprehension strategy of prediction: Predicting key statements before listening using visualization and activating previously acquired knowledge.

Comprehension form:

Global: Focus on keywords

Exercise 2: "What is correct? Listen again and check the box."

Comprehension form:

Selective: Filter out the main statements

Exercise 3: "What does Martin want from his guests? Listen to the conversation and check the box."

Comprehension form:

Selective: Filter out specific information

Exercise 4: "Listen again. Which statements do you hear? Check the boxes as in the example."

Comprehension form:

Global: Understand the text globally

Exercise 5: "Which party will they choose? Listen to the conversation and check the box."

Comprehension form:

Global: Focus on keywords

Exercise 6: "Listen again. Who says what? Identify: Sabine (S) or Khaled (K)."

Comprehension form:

Selective: Filter out specific information

REPRESENTATION OF COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES IN THE COURSE BOOK A2.2

The coursebook "Schritte International A2.2 Neu" also consists of two parts: the coursebook and the workbook. Both have seven chapters each. After each chapter in the coursebook, there is a break with the "Zwischendurch mal" (intermediate reading) pages. The second part of the book comprises the workbook, which also includes listening exercises.

Lesson 8

Exercise 1: "What do you think? Which words are the friends 'playing'? Check the boxes. Listen and compare."

Cognitive Strategy:

Comprehension Strategy of Prediction: Predicting key statements before listening using imagery and activating previously acquired knowledge.

Comprehension Form:

Global: Focus on keywords.

Exercise 2: "Listen again and add the names."

Comprehension Form:

Selective: Filter out specific information.

Exercise 3: "What is correct? Listen to three conversations and check the boxes."

Comprehension Form:

Selective: Filter out the main statements.

Exercise 4: "Who says what to whom? Listen again and connect the dots."

Comprehension Form:

Selective: Listen to the text selectively.

Lesson 9

Exercise 1: "Where are Tim and Sandra? What do you think? Who wants to redecorate the apartment? Tim or Sandra? Who should advise whom? Then listen and compare."

Cognitive Strategy:

Prediction Comprehension Strategy: Predicting key statements before listening using imagery and activating previously acquired knowledge.

Form of Comprehension:

Global: Forming an overall picture of objects, people, and actions.

Exercise 2: "Listen again and compare."

Form of Comprehension:

Global: Focus on keywords.

Exercise 3: "Listen and expand."

Form of Comprehension:

Detailed

Exercise 4: "Listen to the interviews and check the boxes."

Comprehension strategy:

Selective: Filter out the main statements

Lesson 10

Exercise 1: "What do you see? Highlight. Listen and compare."

Cognitive strategy:

Elaboration strategy: Take notes, jot down keywords and terms while listening.

Comprehension strategy:

Global: Focus on keywords

Exercise 2: "Listen again. Which photo is correct? Match it."

Comprehension strategy:

Selective: Listen to the text selectively

Exercise 3: "Listen to the interviews and match them. Note: Not all photos are correct."

Comprehension strategy:

Selective: Filter out specific information

Exercise 4: "Listen again. What is correct? Check it."

Understanding form:

Selective: Filter out the main statements

Lesson 11

Exercise 1: "What do you mean? Speak. Listen and compare."

Cognitive Strategy:

Comprehension strategy of prediction: Predicting key statements before listening using imagery and activating previously acquired knowledge.

Comprehension form:

Global: Focus on keywords

Exercise 2: "What is correct? Listen again and check the box."

Comprehension form:

Selective: Filter out the main statements.

Exercise 3: "From or from? Listen and complete."

Comprehension form:

Detailed

Exercise 4: "How should Mrs. Heigert and Tommy Walk/drive? Listen and match."

Comprehension form:

Global: Focus on keywords

Lesson 12

Exercise 1: "Look at photos 3 to 8 and match them. Listen and compare."

Cognitive Strategy

Elaboration Strategies: Activate prior knowledge.

Comprehension Form:

Global: Focus on keywords

Exercise 2: "What fits? Listen again and connect."

Comprehension Form:

Selective: Filter out main statements

Exercise 3: "Connect. Then listen and compare."

Cognitive Strategy

Elaboration Strategy: Relate new information to prior knowledge.

Comprehension Form:

Selective

Exercise 4: "Listen and sort. Then speak."

Comprehension Form:

Global: Understand the text globally

Exercise 5: "Then listen and compare."

Comprehension Form:

Global: Focus on keywords

Lesson 13

Exercise 1: "Look at the photos. Listen and check the boxes."

Comprehension form:

Selective: Filter out the main points.

Exercise 2: "What fits? Listen again and connect the dots."

Comprehension form:

Selective: Filter out specific information.

Exercise 3: "Listen and complete. Then complete the table."

Comprehension form:

Detailed

Lesson 14

Exercise 1: "What do you mean? Speak. Then listen and compare."

Cognitive Strategy:

Comprehension strategy of prediction: Predicting key content before listening using imagery and activating previously acquired knowledge.

Comprehension form:

Global: Focus on keywords

Exercise 2: "Which photo fits? Listen again and match."

Comprehension form:

Selective: Filter out the main statements

Exercise 3: "Supplement the conversation with because – if – that. Then listen and compare."

Cognitive strategy:

Elaboration strategies: Activate prior knowledge.

Comprehension form:

Global: Focus on keywords

SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS OF THE COURSE BOOK

Table 1 provides a summary analysis of the course book. For this purpose, the frequencies of the individual strategies were determined.

Table 1. Strategies used during listening comprehension

Strategies		Number of strategies occurring
Forms of understanding		
Global hearing		37
	Understand text globally	7
	Focus on keywords	28
	Form an overall picture of objects, people, and Actions	2
Detailed listening		18
Selective listening		52
	Listen to text selectively	8
	Filter out specific information	15
	Filter out main statements	29
Cognitive strategies		
Inference		2
	Use available information to discover meaning	1
	Make predictions (conclude)	0
	Add missing information	1
Understanding strategies of prediction (anticipation)		15

	Predicting general content before listening using context and activating prior knowledge	1
	Predicting content before listening using images and activating prior knowledge	13
	Anticipating the text type based on images	1
Elaboration strategies		15
	Activate prior knowledge	12
	Relate new information to prior knowledge	2
	Take notes while listening, note down keywords and terms	1
Cultural strategies		0
	Comparison between foreign and own culture	0
	Differences, similarities, and commonalities Search	0
Metacognitive strategies		
Plan		0
	Determine the listening goal or identify the goal of a task	0
	Decide whether aspects of the learning tasks can be omitted and which ones must be referred to	0
	Advance structuring (advance organizers)	0
Steering		0
	Conscious control of attention to specific discourse markers	0
	Conscious control of attention to keywords	0
Evaluation		0
	Check whether the listening goal has been achieved	0
	Check understanding	0
Social-affective strategies		
Collaboration with other learners		3
	Solve tasks together	1
	Information exchange	2

REVISED ANALYTICAL CONCLUSION

The analysis of Schritte international Neu A2 demonstrates that listening comprehension is systematically integrated into every unit and follows a consistent structural pattern. The textbook clearly adheres to the traditional pre-, while-, and post-listening framework. However, the analysis reveals that listening tasks are predominantly task-oriented rather than explicitly strategy-oriented.

Cognitive strategies such as prediction through visual prompts and activation of prior knowledge occur frequently, particularly in the initial listening phases of each unit. These strategies support comprehension by guiding learners' attention and facilitating top-down processing. In contrast, metacognitive strategies—such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's own listening process—are rarely made explicit. This suggests that while learners are exposed to strategy use, they are not systematically guided toward strategic awareness.

Furthermore, the limited inclusion of dialectal variation indicates a focus on standardized language input, which may support beginner learners but does not fully reflect authentic communicative contexts.

Overall, the findings suggest that the textbook provides structured and accessible listening practice, yet it does not consistently promote the development of autonomous strategic listening competence. For foreign language acquisition, explicit strategy instruction and reflection phases would be necessary to strengthen learners' metacognitive control and long-term listening development.

Although Schritte international Neu A2 offers a wide range of listening activities, it does not systematically foster metacognitive strategy awareness, which limits the development of autonomous listening competence.

The textbook integrates listening strategies primarily in an implicit manner, without explicitly guiding learners to reflect on or consciously apply these strategies.

While listening tasks are consistently structured, the textbook shows little evidence of a progressive development of strategic listening competence across the units.

In my opinion, the new version is more modern and designed to facilitate faster and more effective learning because students can better understand and practice the material. It is very interesting to see how listening comprehension exercises help to learn a foreign or second language and how they improve efficiency during the acquisition of the foreign language.

LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study provides a detailed analysis of listening comprehension strategies in Schritte international Neu A2, but several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the analysis focused solely on a single textbook at the A2 proficiency level, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other textbooks or proficiency levels. Second, the evaluation was based on the researcher's observations of tasks and did not include empirical data on actual learner use of strategies, which may result in an incomplete picture of how strategies are implemented in practice. Finally, some interpretative decisions regarding strategy categorization could be influenced by subjective judgment.

Despite these limitations, the study offers important implications for foreign language teaching. Teachers should be aware that while the textbook systematically incorporates listening tasks, explicit instruction in metacognitive strategies is largely absent. Therefore, educators may need to supplement textbook activities with reflection phases and explicit strategy training to support learners in developing autonomous listening competence.

Future research could expand the scope by analyzing multiple textbooks across different proficiency levels to identify patterns in strategy integration. Empirical studies observing learners' actual strategy use during classroom activities would provide further insight into the effectiveness of textbook design for promoting strategic listening. Additionally, longitudinal studies could examine how the implementation of explicit strategy instruction influences learners' listening development over time.

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