




# Teaching Interactive Vietnamese Listening for Foreigners

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**Abstract.** Research has shown that a remarkable percentage of reality listening activities are interactive. Except for media listening, speech listening, eavesdropping, and listening activities are all geared towards two-way listening and speaking in face-to-face conversations.

Suppose the listening activities involve the listener in communication settings in which the listener and the speaker can interact to achieve fruitful understanding. In that case, they shall have a constructive effect on the process of learning and teaching in class. However, in language teaching, listening activities traditionally brought to an inactive recognition of the skills of listening, which lead learners to view listening as an activity of pure reception in that the listener just perceives and takes notes instead of being active in trying to synthesize the received information, attempting to find illuminations when the process of decoding-constructing encounters obstacles.

For those reasons, we research applying the interactive approach to teaching Vietnamese listening to foreign students. We examine research on teaching interactive listening in the world and Vietnam and investigate test sets for assessing language listening competency. Then, we clarify the concepts of interactive listening and their constituent elements. After that, we propose teaching techniques for Vietnamese interactive listening. Meanwhile, we propose a set of criteria to assess the interactive listening skills for use in the teaching-learning process and testing-assessing activities. The results obtained have the potential to serve as a basis for developing interactive Vietnamese listening coursebooks for foreigners as well as standards for assessing tests of Vietnamese interactive listening ability.

**Keywords:** Interactive · Listening Skills · Teaching Techniques for Interactive Listening · Assessment Criteria · Assessment Standards

## 1 What is Interactive Listening?

First, we must define what it's like to listen without an interactive element. Arihant experts [1] have suggested that some non-interactive listening situations are listening to radio, television, movies, lectures, or speeches. In such situations, we often do not have the opportunity to ask for more clarification, to ask to speak more slowly or to repeat. Next, about the concept of interactive listening, in the 80s and 90s there were

many studies in Australia, UK and USA on interaction in the classroom. Specifically, Gordon Wells [16], Jerome Bruner [5], and Douglas Barnes [2] have been pivotal in promoting consciousness of the language's role in interactions in groups. At the time, the proposal that listeners were helped by their teachers and encouraged to construct their own knowledge showed a particular pedagogical perspective [3]. Galvin [8] was one of the earliest to propose the notion of "interactive listening". In 1990, Richards [11] didn't use the concept of "interactive listening" but did articulate the functions and purposes of interaction in understanding language. Vandergrift [14, 15] is particularly interested in interactive listening. In his research, the nucleus of interactive listening was not "maintaining social relationships" or "recognizing elements of a message". Alternatively, the interaction between the listeners and the speakers is highlighted in his statement: "interactive listening is highly contextualized and bidirectional, involving interaction with the speaker". In addition, there are many other definitions of interactive listening as well. Interactive listening is a type of listening that the listeners control the speed, repetition, and interpretation of the speakers [10]. Interactive listening is listening in which listeners respond by means of words and not using words in correspondence to the listening information the speaker is providing [4]. Interactive listening means listening attentively, listening carefully, and focusing on what is being said without losing contact with the speaker and thus being able to respond effectively [1].

## **2 Teaching Listening Comprehension with Interactivity Increased**

We need to realize that a teacher's teaching activity is a great opportunity to turn itself into an interactive activity. This teaching activity should not be limited to conveying the specific content of a lecture, but more broadly, it is a demonstration for learners of language skills [6]. From these perspectives and the above research results, it has been shown that teaching and learning interactive listening is an indispensable thing that needs to be directed to achieve the goal of language practice in the social communication reality of students. Interactive listening is highly contextualized, has feedback, and interacts with the speakers. In other words, interactive listening is the process of collaborative listening, reproducing, and mastering the language.

### **2.1 Collaborative Listening**

Instead of traditional listening exercises focusing only on informational content and elements of the message, we should enhance the interactive elements by creating opportunities for students to collaborate within the listening process.

For the forms of informational exercises of listening, such as listening to the main idea, listening to recognize right and wrong, listening to choose the right answer, etc., we can completely encourage the learner to exchange with his partners and compare their absorptions. Their thinking, if different, should be encouraged.

For listening exercises as getting details, answering questions, giving opinions, etc., learners should be encouraged to act when given the opportunity to express, ask or answer questions, introduce with expansion, clarify more context, verify, or repeat. They can share their answers, paraphrase and edit their perspectives after having discussed and

negotiated. The teacher doesn't need to give the keys and just motivates students to debate with their partners.

The re-playing of the recordings depends on how well learners feel about their mutual understanding. If the learner is not confident of the listening they perceive, he can interact directly with the listening material, do the playback, request explanation, confirmation, speed control, and negotiation control. The teacher can step in to supply essential corrections or confirmations if the learner deviates from their goals.

In the listening process, learners must communicate with each other and negotiate with the speakers (or teachers) to make the input corpus understandable. The verifiable understanding of the information provided is discussed and understood through the interaction between listeners, listeners, and speakers (or teachers). If students miss some information, they can ask their partners to repeat it. In case the learner provides dissimilar opinions to their partners, he may look back on the listening and search for clues to find the right ones. When he is unsure of any detail within the recordings, he may consult with his partners to verify. If they are confused about the text, they can ask for clarification. Learners control the speed of recordings, allowing them to interact directly with the materials for listening or the teachers, being a resource in need. With the interweaving of listening and production activities, listening has become a more interactive activity between learners and learners, learners and teachers, and learners and recorded materials.

## **2.2 Reproducing Communication**

This is an indispensable and extremely necessary activity for students on the way to the goal that students can use the material they have learned to communicate in real life. At the same time, this is also one of the criteria to evaluate the success and effectiveness of teachers' teaching that students will verify and evaluate after their classes. Thus, in the communication reproducing phase, the teachers provide the learners' opportunities to engage in fruitful communication behaviors on issues that are closely related to the listening material. A wide variety of listening activities can be supplied for the learners to be able to freely choose the type of activities they like, bringing up larger inspiration and eliminating the possibility of imposing stereotyped duties on the learner. Those forms of listening activities are suggested to be a decision of the group as choices, statements, problems solution, debates, playing roles, interviews, etc. When a listening activity is selected, students make interaction with partners in pairs, groups, or even the whole class, to come up with ideas and perspectives. Teachers should be the ones who provide, orient, and limit communication situations, communication materials, communication strategies as well as the level of communication content for students. It is also the teacher's teaching goals that are at the same time, the learning goals of each lesson that students need to achieve.

## **2.3 Demonstration**

Student performance can be seen as the final stage of a series of teacher-student listening comprehension teaching-learning activities. Depending on the actual situations and conditions allowed, these demonstration activities can take place in a simulated classroom space/situation or, at best, in a real space/ social situation. In terms of practicality,

teachers should try their best to bring about the highest possible authenticity. A class activity, for example, can be an oral demonstration. Student pairs are invited to perform in front of their classmates and get comments. As opposed to personal demonstration traditionally, the learner remains to do the pair work, which brings to everyone the chance to demonstrate in front of a crowd with a tight duration of time after a secure and caring drill. Since pairs of different learners can show nonidentical actions, the speaking demonstration will be extra engaging and colorful. Demonstrating in pairs is good for those who tend to be introverted and have a fear of shame in front of a crowd. Pair-work can assist them in conquering their fearfulness when they speak Vietnamese, and learners can help one another throughout the demonstration when anyone among them is having difficulty. Thanks to that, this demonstration activity also helps create many opportunities and interactive activities for students.

In short, all traditional information-oriented listening comprehension activities can be enhanced with interactive elements in various forms of teaching and learning listening comprehension. It can be information-gathering activities to fill out a form by communicating, interviewing each other, and interviewing people around (interview with classmates, interview with teachers, etc.) on a suggested topic. For example: If the class organizes a party, what kind of food and drink do people like? Post-listening interactive activities require students to use the information in the lesson, such as deciding which TV programs to watch, who to vote for as leader for the next term, writing a review for a book or movie, etc. Creative speaking and writing activities, such as composing a story, improvising a play in class, etc.

### 3 Discussions

#### 3.1 Interactive Strategies for Listening Comprehension

Regarding the interactive listening comprehension strategies, Lynch [9], Vandergrift [15], Rost and Ross [12], Tokeshi [13], Farrell and Mallard [7] classified the observed interactive listening comprehension tactics in three groups - new information-developing, old information confirming and clarifying. The main strategies of interactive listening comprehension identified in those five research studies above are as follows (Table 1).

#### 3.2 Techniques for Teaching Interactive Vietnamese Listening Comprehension

**Creating Communication Situations.** There are at least two participants in interactive communication. Any specific message content is shaped partly by the content of the previous information from all the contributors. Therefore, it is impossible to predict the content of messages from any of the participants. Conferences, debates, seminars, and telephone conversations are examples of interactive communication. Depending on each case, the participants can be two people (in dialogues), several people (in group discussions), to a lot of people (in a conference). The manners in which the listeners and speakers interact can vary correspondingly. However, the principal interaction procedure continues to be the same.

**Table 1.** Main strategies of interactive listening comprehension.

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>
Perpetuation Prompt	Listeners do not ask for detail or repetition. They specify the contemporary condition of comprehension by a public announcement or a gestural signal.
<i>a. Absorption</i>	<i>Listeners show that they understand. They use body language, spoken and nonverbal prompts to tell the speaker to carry on.</i>
<i>b. Falsifying</i>	<i>Listeners show the speaker with false signals or answers so that they don't have to make clarification, or admit that they don't understand.</i>
Test the hypothesis	Listeners ask particular questions about previously said data to verify that they have understood and/or to confirm what they are awaited to do.
Inference providing	The listeners show present apprehension by making questions that use the settled information the interlocutor provided.
Fully Restating	The listeners use L1; L2 or gestures to request to repeat completely, restate or simplify the previous statements.
Partly Restating	The listeners make a request related to a particular word, expression, or passage that they didn't understand in the last statement.
<i>a. Word Restating</i>	<i>The listeners make a request related to a particular word. This can be a request to repeat a word with an intonation of a question.</i>
<i>b. Passage Restating</i>	<i>The listeners make a request related to a particular section of the previous statement where the listeners cannot understand a particular word.</i>
<i>c. Missing word</i>	<i>The listeners make a request related to a particular word/ item which has gone over. Normally, the listeners don't remember, so, they ask to repeat.</i>
<i>d. Spot Restating</i>	<i>The listeners mention a place in the previous statement, not a particular word.</i>
Gestures	The listeners show the demand to make explanation by using gestures and/or nonverbal language.
Recalling	The listeners repeat the previous statements to consolidate their comprehension.
Non-understanding	When the listeners don't understand something, they signify the speaker by all means.

Communication situations are real social situations. Therefore, design as many social situations outside the classroom as possible to promote the use of event-oriented language. Organize periodic extracurricular tasks using the language via interest groups, sports, games, fairs, markets, and outings, to expand students' speaking experience as activities.

**Motivating Listeners to Give Feedback.** Using foreign languages as a supplementary means to develop students' communication skills. Provide students with chances to socialize with native speakers as many as possible.

**Ensuring Two-Way Interaction.** Most interactions in social communication are two-way, except for a limited number of situations, such as interrogation. Therefore, even though the question and answer activity can also be partly considered interactive, however, it is only a one-way interaction, so in the question and answer activity, there should be turn-taking to participate in the communication to increase the interactive dimension to be similar to actual interactions in the society outside.

**Creating Communication Issues for Listeners to Solve.** In communication activities, there will always be communication issues arising during the process. Those communication issues can be internal language issues, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, semantics, pragmatics, etc., but they can also be social, technical issues, etc. outside the language, such as, space, transmission, time, community, cultural rituals, etc. If there isn't any communication issue, then it is no longer a communication activity. The task of the listeners is to find a way to solve the communication issues encountered during the listening process with a certain goal. For example, when a speaker's pronunciation is unclear, the listener must immediately interact with the response, asking the speaker to repeat, clarify, or explain further.

**Setting Interactive Goals for Listeners to Accomplish.** All interactive communication must have a goal. On the contrary, it is very difficult to demand interaction if there is no goal. The communication issues mentioned above can also be the target content that teachers want to train students. We can clearly see that through the following specific exercise, in which students practice numbers and how to say statistics with numbers.

Exercise: Do the survey. Compare your answers with the other students in your class. Find out how many agree or disagree with the statements. Use **numbers** to report your class's opinions. Other students listen to the presenter and take notes of the **numbers**.

Example: **Nine out of ten** students agree that our feelings control us.

**Monitoring the Collaborative Activeness of the Listeners and Speakers.** As studies have shown, interactive listening is the reciprocal process of communication. In which the relationship between the speaker and the listener is a relationship that must always have collaboration, cooperation, reciprocity, and working together. In this relationship, both the speaker and the listener play an active role. And it is paramount that the listener actively engages in the conversation with the speaker by providing feedback. Therefore, the exercises and activities are designed and done. The teacher must always facilitate and always monitor the active collaboration of the listeners and speakers. One specific example is as with the exercise: Compare your answers. Teachers must ensure that their students interact with each other by speaking and listening rather than students giving the results to each other to see and take notes.

## 4 Conclusion

Interaction reflects the communicative nature of language. Interaction is a skill and, at the same time, a very important communication ability in the process of learning, practicing, and using language in the real social environment of learners. It can be said

that interaction is a decisive factor for students' language communication ability in practice. Therefore, this study has clarified the concept of interactive listening, teaching listening comprehension with interactivity enhanced, discussed interactive listening comprehension strategies, and applied techniques to teach interactive Vietnamese listening comprehension skills to foreign students. The results of this research will create the scientific foundation necessary for the proposal of criteria for assessing interactive listening ability, evaluating interactive listening ability test questions, and directions for composing Vietnamese interactive listening textbooks for foreigners.

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