



APPROACHES TO TRAINING LISTENING AND NOTE-TAKING SKILLS OF ESP LEARNERS

Abduvaxabova U.Yu

Associate professor

University of World Economy and Diplomacy

E-mail u.abduvaxobova@uwed.uz

Abstract. Listening and note-taking are essential skills for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learners, especially those preparing for international academic and professional contexts. This article explores pedagogical approaches to developing these skills, with a focus on international relations students. Drawing on insights from applied linguistics, cognitive theory, and ESP methodology, the paper analyzes effective teaching strategies such as strategy-based instruction, task-based learning, and the use of authentic conference materials. Practical classroom activities are suggested to demonstrate how these approaches can be implemented. The findings highlight the importance of integrating note-taking training with listening comprehension activities and suggest implications for curriculum design.

Keywords: listening comprehension, note-taking, pedagogical approaches, international conferences, academic English

Аудирование и конспектирование являются важнейшими навыками для изучающих английский язык в рамках английского языка для специальных целей (ESP), особенно для студентов, готовящихся к обучению и профессиональной деятельности в международном контексте. В данной статье рассматриваются педагогические подходы к развитию этих навыков с акцентом на студентов, изучающих международные отношения. Основываясь на положениях прикладной лингвистики, когнитивной теории и методологии ESP, в статье анализируются эффективные стратегии обучения, такие как обучение на основе стратегий, обучение на основе заданий и использование аутентичных материалов международных конференций. Предлагаются практические аудиторные задания, демонстрирующие способы реализации данных подходов в учебном процессе. Результаты подчеркивают важность интеграции обучения конспектированию с развитием навыков понимания устной речи на слух и позволяют сформулировать соответствующие рекомендации для разработки учебных программ.

Ключевые слова: понимание устной речи на слух, конспектирование, педагогические подходы, международные конференции, академический английский.

Annotatsiya. Tinglab tushunish va konspekt yozish ingliz tilini maxsus maqsadlarda (ESP) o‘rganuvchilar uchun, ayniqsa xalqaro akademik va kasbiy muhitga tayyorlanayotgan talabalar uchun muhim ko‘nikmalar hisoblanadi. Mazkur maqolada ushbu ko‘nikmalarni rivojlantirishga qaratilgan pedagogik yondashuvlar, xususan, xalqaro munosabatlar yo‘nalishida tahsil olayotgan talabalar misolida ko‘rib chiqiladi. Amaliy tilshunoslik, kognitiv nazariya va ESP metodologiyasiga oid qarashlarga asoslanib, maqolada strategiyaga asoslangan ta’lim, topshiriqqa asoslangan ta’lim hamda xalqaro konferensiyalarning autentik materiallaridan foydalanish kabi samarali o‘qitish strategiyalari tahlil qilinadi. Ushbu yondashuvlarni ta’lim jarayonida qo‘llash usullarini namoyish etuvchi amaliy auditoriya mashg‘ulotlari ham taklif etiladi. Natijalar konspekt yozishni o‘rgatishni tinglab tushunish faoliyatlari bilan integratsiya qilish muhimligini ko‘rsatadi hamda o‘quv dasturlarini ishlab chiqish uchun tegishli tavsiyalarni ilgari suradi.

Kalit so‘zlar: tinglab tushunish, konspekt yozish, pedagogik yondashuvlar, xalqaro konferensiyalar, akademik ingliz tili.

Introduction. The ability to listen effectively and take structured notes is critical for ESP learners, particularly those in fields such as international relations, law, business, and diplomacy. In professional and academic settings, conferences, lectures, and negotiations demand both accurate comprehension and the ability to record information efficiently for later use (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). However, listening and note-taking are often underemphasized in traditional ESP classrooms, where greater attention tends to be given to speaking and writing (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

Literature review

Listening has been described as the “Cinderella skill” in language learning because it traditionally receives less systematic instruction compared to speaking and writing (Renandya & Farrell, 2011). In English for Specific Purposes (ESP), however, listening is central, as learners are frequently required to process input from specialized lectures, professional presentations, or business negotiations conducted in English. The complexity of ESP listening stems not only from linguistic challenges but also from the density of domain-specific vocabulary and discourse structures. Effective listening requires the interplay of bottom-up processing (decoding sounds, words, and syntax) and top-down processing (drawing on background knowledge, situational context, and expectations) (Field, 2008). When ESP learners lack strategies for integrating these processes, comprehension gaps often occur, which in turn affect their professional and academic performance.

Note-taking, a skill often intertwined with listening, is not merely a mechanical transcription activity but a complex cognitive and metacognitive process. It requires the listener to actively select, organize, and rephrase information in real time (Dunkel & Davy, 1989). Within the ESP context—particularly in academic and professional settings such as international conferences or technical briefings—students must demonstrate the ability to capture essential arguments, data, and field-specific terminology while filtering out less relevant information. Studies indicate that learners who are explicitly trained in note-taking techniques, including structured systems like the Cornell method, linear and non-linear

keyword listing, and concept mapping, show significantly improved comprehension and long-term retention of content (Carrier, 2003). These methods not only facilitate better memory but also encourage active engagement with input, fostering deeper understanding.

ESP pedagogy emphasizes authenticity, learner needs, and task-based approaches (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). Listening and note-taking instruction aligned with authentic materials—such as real conference recordings, lectures, or workplace dialogues—better prepares students for real-world communicative demands. Bocanegra-Valle (2010) stresses that the integration of authentic input fosters pragmatic awareness and domain-specific literacy, both crucial for ESP learners navigating professional discourse communities. Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests that strategy-based instruction, where learners are guided to consciously apply listening and note-taking strategies, enhances both their autonomy and performance. For example, training learners to predict lecture organization, recognize discourse markers, and apply selective listening improves their ability to process dense input efficiently. More recent scholars also highlight the importance of combining explicit instruction with technology-enhanced tools (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). Digital platforms offering lecture capture, replay functions, and annotation features provide learners with opportunities for repeated exposure and self-regulated practice. This multimodal support allows for scaffolding of listening and note-taking strategies, bridging the gap between classroom instruction and authentic communicative environments. In addition, collaborative tasks, such as peer-sharing of notes or joint construction of summaries, have been found to develop both accuracy and critical thinking, reinforcing the social dimension of ESP learning.

Taken together, the literature shows that effective training in listening and note-taking for ESP learners requires a multidimensional approach: integrating cognitive and metacognitive strategy training, leveraging authentic materials, and incorporating task-based and technology-supported practices. Such approaches align with the broader goals of ESP pedagogy, ensuring that learners acquire transferable skills applicable in academic, professional, and intercultural contexts.

Methods

Strategy-based instruction emphasizes developing learners’ metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies for listening and note-taking. Metacognitive strategies help learners plan, monitor, and evaluate their listening processes, while cognitive strategies focus on identifying key information, employing abbreviations, symbols, and structural cues, and filtering out redundancy. Socio-affective strategies, such as peer collaboration and confidence-building, further support learner autonomy (Mendelsohn, 1995). In note-taking, students can be explicitly trained to distinguish between major arguments and supporting details, thereby avoiding the common tendency to transcribe verbatim. A gradual release model is effective: teachers first model note-taking on authentic input, highlighting decision-making in real time, and then progressively transfer responsibility to learners.

Practical activity example: “ **Guided noticing task**” can scaffold the process. The teacher plays a short conference excerpt twice: in the first listening, learners identify the

main idea without taking notes, focusing on gist comprehension. In the second listening, they employ pre-taught abbreviations and symbols to capture details. This is followed by comparing learner-produced notes with sample notes projected by the teacher, encouraging critical reflection on strategies and accuracy. Such guided activities move learners toward independent application of strategies in authentic contexts.

Task-based learning (TBL) situates listening and note-taking practice within meaningful communicative tasks that reflect learners’ professional or academic needs (Ellis, 2003). By embedding listening in purposeful activities, TBL ensures that learners engage not only in comprehension but also in output tasks that require transformation and application of the information noted down. This aligns with ESP’s principle of task authenticity, bridging the gap between classroom learning and workplace performance.

<i>Practical activity 1:</i> “Conference simulation”	<i>Practical activity 2:</i> “Information gap listening”
-can be organized, where students assume roles as “speakers” and “delegates.” Speakers deliver short presentations (e.g., on climate change or trade agreements), while delegates take notes to later prepare summary reports or pose follow-up questions. Such tasks replicate real-world professional scenarios and encourage learners to manage selective listening under time constraints.	-activity requires pairs of students to listen to different but complementary sections of a lecture. They then pool their notes to reconstruct the full message. This not only promotes accuracy but also reinforces peer support, negotiation of meaning, and collaborative synthesis—essential skills in professional settings where shared understanding is vital.

Authenticity is central in ESP pedagogy (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). Exposing learners to authentic recordings from TED talks, UN sessions, or international conferences provides access to varied speech rates, accents, rhetorical structures, and specialized vocabulary. Beyond linguistic input, authentic materials model the discourse conventions of professional communities, thus fostering discourse competence alongside listening and note-taking skills.

Practical activity 1: A **“TED Talk jigsaw”** divides learners into groups, each responsible for a different section of a talk. After individual note-taking, the groups collaborate to assemble a comprehensive outline. This encourages both individual accountability and collaborative synthesis.

Practical activity 2: In a **“Key term identification”** activity, learners listen to authentic speeches and extract domain-specific vocabulary, later compiling glossaries based on their notes. This reinforces selective listening, promotes retention of specialized terminology, and integrates note-taking with vocabulary acquisition—a crucial dimension in ESP contexts. Sustainable skill development requires integration of multiple approaches across extended periods. Project-based learning provides learners with opportunities to apply strategies repeatedly in authentic contexts, reflecting both process and progress.

Practical project example: A “**Model UN listening journal**” can run over the course of a semester. Learners regularly watch excerpts from real Model United Nations debates, maintain a listening journal containing their notes, reflections on strategies used, and self-assessments of progress. At the end of the course, they present on the evolution of their note-taking practices, supported by examples from their journals. Such a longitudinal project combines authenticity, reflection, and strategy transfer, fostering learner autonomy and long-term competence.

This integrated framework demonstrates that effective training in ESP listening and note-taking goes beyond isolated skill practice. It requires deliberate strategy instruction, task authenticity, exposure to real-world discourse, technological scaffolding, and sustained project work. Together, these methodological approaches prepare learners to operate effectively in the global professional and academic arenas where English serves as the primary medium of communication.

Discussion

Training ESP students in listening and note-taking requires careful integration of linguistic competence with professional skill development. Unlike general English contexts, ESP listening tasks often involve dense input, technical terminology, and culturally embedded discourse patterns. Thus, pedagogical approaches must not only strengthen bottom-up decoding and top-down inferencing but also equip learners with strategies to manage cognitive load in real-time professional communication (Field, 2008). The literature reviewed indicates that instruction is most effective when it is integrated, contextualized, and reflective, rather than treated as an isolated skill.

For students in fields such as international relations, the stakes are particularly high. Exposure to authentic diplomatic discourse—such as debates, negotiations, and formal presentations—enables learners to acquire both linguistic accuracy and pragmatic competence. Pragmatic competence, which involves interpreting speaker intentions, recognizing politeness strategies, and responding appropriately to institutional conventions, is critical in professional communication settings (Canale & Swain, 1980; Bocanegra-Valle, 2010). Authentic materials therefore serve a dual function: they familiarize learners with specialized vocabulary while simultaneously socializing them into the discourse practices of their professional community. The inclusion of practical classroom activities demonstrates that the methodological approaches under review can be operationalized effectively. Strategy-based instruction heightens learner awareness by encouraging metacognitive reflection and conscious application of techniques, which promotes autonomy and self-regulation (Mendelsohn, 1995). Task-based activities create conditions for meaningful interaction, where note-taking is embedded in communicative outcomes such as reporting, summarizing, or questioning (Ellis, 2003). Authentic materials provide relevance and increase motivation, as learners perceive a direct connection between classroom practice and real-world demands. Technology-enhanced tools, meanwhile, offer scaffolding through replay functions, visual mapping, and multimodal resources, thereby reducing the gap between novice and expert performance. Longer-term projects, such as maintaining Model UN listening journals, extend learning beyond individual lessons and encourage learners to

monitor their development over time, a process that fosters reflective practice and learner autonomy.

Despite these benefits, several challenges remain. A key concern is the alignment of materials with learners’ proficiency levels. Authentic input, while valuable, often contains linguistic features—fast speech rates, varied accents, complex syntax—that can overwhelm lower-level learners. Teachers must therefore balance authenticity with comprehensibility, possibly through scaffolding activities, pre-listening tasks, and graduated exposure. Another persistent issue is the assessment of note-taking outcomes. Unlike traditional language assessments, note-taking is process-oriented and individualized, making it difficult to evaluate objectively. Rubrics may help assess accuracy, organization, and relevance, but capturing the cognitive processes underlying note-taking remains challenging. Moreover, the integration of technology, while promising, raises questions about accessibility, digital literacy, and over-reliance on external tools such as captions or automatic transcriptions.

Future research should address these gaps by examining the longitudinal effects of listening and note-taking training. Long-term studies are needed to establish whether explicit strategy instruction and project-based approaches lead to sustained improvements in both comprehension and professional performance. Comparative studies across disciplines could also reveal whether approaches effective in international relations contexts transfer to other ESP domains, such as engineering, medicine, or business. In addition, greater attention should be paid to the role of collaborative note-taking and peer feedback in developing critical thinking and information synthesis. Finally, empirical work on assessment frameworks for note-taking—particularly those incorporating digital tools—could help refine pedagogical practice and ensure that evaluation aligns with the complex nature of the skill.

Taken together, the reviewed evidence suggests that effective training in ESP listening and note-taking requires multidimensional pedagogical design. By combining strategy instruction, task-based practice, authentic input, technological scaffolding, and longitudinal projects, educators can equip learners not only with linguistic competence but also with the transferable skills necessary to participate in global academic and professional communities.

Conclusion

Listening and note-taking are indispensable for ESP learners preparing for international academic and professional contexts. Pedagogical approaches such as strategy-based instruction, task-based learning, and the use of authentic materials have been shown to enhance learners’ skills. The integration of technology further expands the scope of practice. For international relations students, systematic training in these areas not only improves academic performance but also equips them with essential professional competencies.

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