

Article

The Analysis of Listening Teaching in Chinese English Major's Viewing, Listening and Speaking Textbook: Base on Communicative Competence

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Abstract: With the increasing globalization of the world, English has become one of the most influential and widely used languages. Consequently, the demand for proficient English learners in China has grown, leading universities to strengthen English teaching, particularly in listening skills, which are essential for communication. As textbooks serve as fundamental resources in English education, their evaluation plays a crucial role in ensuring effective language acquisition. This study analyzes the listening section of *New Horizon College English: Viewing, Listening & Speaking* based on a well-established communicative competence framework. The analysis focuses on five key components of communicative competence: discourse competence, linguistic competence, actional competence, sociocultural competence, and strategic competence. The findings suggest that the textbook effectively integrates listening and communication skills, fostering students' linguistic, discourse, and actional competence. Additionally, while the selected listening materials enhance students' exposure to authentic language, their difficulty level may pose challenges for first-year English majors.

Keywords: communicative competence; English teaching; English textbooks

1. Introduction

In the context of continuous globalization, English, as the most widely used and influential language in the world, holds undeniable importance. Under these circumstances, there is a growing demand for highly proficient English professionals in China. As a result, universities have begun to strengthen English teaching and improve students' overall proficiency. As a crucial component in enhancing students' English skills, college English listening courses play a significant role in their overall language learning.

Darti and Asmawati believe that listening is a very important skill because it is the most widely used in daily life, and learning to listen effectively can greatly help improve speaking skills [1]. Similarly, Yavuz and Celik stated that "listening skills can be assumed as a significant agent in oral production by establishing a background for communication." [2]. Thus, listening is a crucial aspect of communication, and effective listening skills help students understand and respond appropriately to others.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, since listening is such a crucial aspect of English learning for students, effective listening instruction is becoming increasingly important. As the primary teaching medium, English textbooks play an integral role in listening classes. Shahid, Qasim, and Iqbal argue that "a textbook is one of the most substantial elements of classroom learning." [3]. Therefore, selecting a good English textbook can greatly benefit students in their English learning. In countries where textbooks serve as the main educational resource, textbook evaluation is an indispensable process. This is especially true for China, where textbooks are a major instructional resource, making the

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analysis of English teaching materials vital to English education. Therefore, this study primarily analyzes and evaluates the listening section of the Chinese English major's textbook *New Horizon College English: Viewing, Listening & Speaking* [4] in the light of communicative competence.

Regarding communicative competence, Dell Hymes defined it as a linguistic term referring to a language user's grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology, phonology, and related aspects [5]. They later divided it into four components: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. Subsequently, Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, and Thurrell adapted the theory of communicative competence proposed by their predecessors and integrated their own ideas, further dividing communicative competence into five aspects: discourse competence, linguistic competence, actional competence, sociocultural competence, and strategic competence [6]. Chomsky's concept of universal grammar and grammatical competence has been expanded to a broader perspective, including the use of language for social, cultural, communicative, strategic, and meaningful purposes [7]. Communicative competence has been widely used in linguistic research. For instance, Tavi demonstrated experimentally that integrating listening and speaking skills in instruction improved students' oral communication abilities [8]. To collect data, he designed a pre-test, post-test, and various tasks for 180 students from the preparatory school of Hacettepe University, Turkey. Ultimately, he found that students who combined listening and speaking performed better.

This paper focuses on using communicative competence theory to analyze listening instruction in the *Viewing, Listening & Speaking* textbook for Chinese English majors, which integrates listening and communication. By analyzing the teaching material, this study aims to determine whether the textbook effectively combines listening and communication competencies and aligns with the principles of communicative competence.

2. Theoretical Framework

In this paper, the theory of communicative competence, proposed by Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, and Thurrell [6], will be used to analyze the *Viewing, Listening & Speaking* textbook. Communicative competence includes discourse competence, linguistic competence, actional competence, sociocultural competence, and strategic competence.

Discourse competence involves the selection, sequencing, and arrangement of words, structures, sentences, and utterances to achieve a coherent spoken or written text [6]. Linguistic competence covers the basic elements of communication: sentence patterns and types, constitutive structures, morphological variations, lexical resources, and the phonetic and orthographic systems needed for verbal or written communication [6]. Actional competence refers to the ability to convey and understand communicative intentions, which involves matching verbal communicative intentions with linguistic forms based on the cognition of a series of speech schemata (speech acts and speech act sets) with illocutionary force [6]. Sociocultural competence refers to the knowledge required to express information correctly according to the pragmatic factors related to the change of language use in the entire social and cultural context of communication [6]. Finally, strategic competence refers to the ability to understand communication strategies and how to use them effectively [6].

As for the Chinese English major's textbook *New Horizon College English: Viewing, Listening & Speaking* [4], it is primarily used for English major students. The textbook contains eight units in total, each of which includes two main parts: listening and speaking. All the activities are designed based on these two parts. For this article, the focus will be on analyzing the listening sections. The listening parts in this textbook are divided into two sections: "Opening Up" and "Listening to the World." In the following, I will analyze the contents of these two listening activities using the framework of communicative competence [6].

3. Analysis

3.1. The Analysis of the Listening Part of Opening up

For the Opening section, it serves as a lead-in, which is an important teaching step to help teachers guide students into a learning state quickly. Thus, the design of this activity is indispensable. The lead-in involves teachers showing students the teaching objectives, content, and methods in certain ways, guiding students to make cognitive preparations so that they can engage with new teaching content and activities at the beginning of a lesson. The Opening Up section introduces individual topics in vivid forms such as pictures, texts, and discussions, with the aim of stimulating students' interest and arousing their enthusiasm for an in-depth understanding and discussion of the topic. For example, in Unit One, there are two activities. The first activity asks students to think about the activities they sometimes do on weekends and add as many as they can in the blanks. As shown in Figure 1 below:

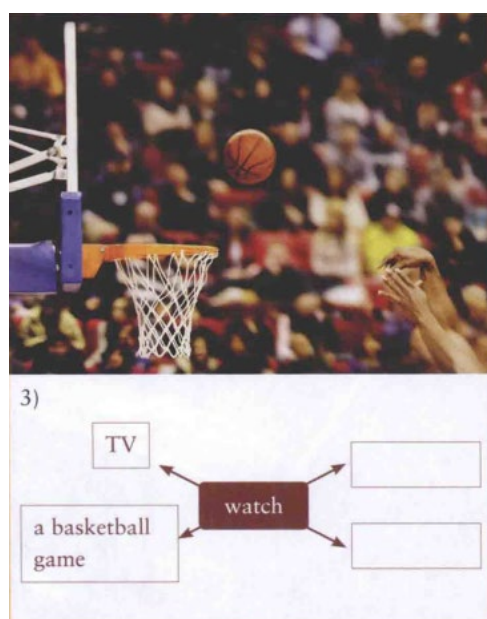


Figure 1. the first activity of opening up in unit.

It can be seen from this activity that students are required to fill in the blanks with relevant activities that can be matched with verbs, according to the verbs given in the middle. This activity uses lexical phrases to introduce the topic, such as verb collocations (e.g., watch TV, watch a basketball game), which can help students improve their linguistic competence.

For the second activity, students are asked to work in pairs and compare their answers. Then, they ask their partner if they enjoy doing any of the activities mentioned in the word network, and whether they did any of them last weekend. This activity mainly encourages students to ask for and give information and involves questions and answers to ease students' emotions. Thus, it primarily focuses on developing students' actional competence.

As for the activity design of Opening Up in the seven units at the end of the book, it follows the same two-part structure as the first unit. The first part involves selecting appropriate formulaic language, and the second part focuses on group communication. For example, in Opening Up in Unit 2, the first part asks students to read the statements and underline the alternatives that are true for them or fill in the blanks based on their own experiences, as shown below:

- 1) I go to the cinema about once a month / every two months / ____.
- 2) I prefer romantic / action / ____ films.

In the activity design of the second unit, students are provided with whole sentences and asked to choose answers based on their own interests, which encourages greater autonomy. Moreover, providing sentences can better help students communicate, thus improving both their discourse competence and linguistic competence. The second part of Unit 2's Opening Up asks students to work in pairs and compare their answers. This mirrors the structure of Unit 1 and primarily focuses on developing students' actional competence.

In summary, Opening Up focuses on discourse competence, linguistic competence, and actional competence, but the activity design overlooks the other two competences (sociocultural competence and strategic competence). Thus, the design of this activity may not fully align with the theory of communicative competence.

3.2. The Analysis of the Listening Part of Listening to the World

As for the Listening to the World section, it is divided into three parts: sharing, listening, and viewing. It selects BBC audio and video materials to design engaging listening and speaking activities aimed at improving students' English listening skills. In this section, I will discuss it from three aspects, namely the three activities: sharing, listening, and viewing.

3.2.1. Sharing in Listening to the World

In this part, the general structure of each unit is the same, though it may vary slightly depending on the topic. First, students are asked to watch a street interview video selected from the BBC, in which the interviewees share their personal experiences or explain their opinions on a specific topic. This provides language demonstration and opinion sharing for students. The book uses authentic listening texts, as authentic material is considered helpful for students to improve their comprehension and enhance their reasoning skills [9]. By using authentic listening texts, such as interviews in this unit, students can also develop their discourse competence [10].

For example, in this section of Unit 3 of the book, students are first asked to watch the podcast from beginning to end to grasp its general idea [11]. Then, they should read the questions before watching Part 1 of the podcast and answering the questions, as shown in Figure 2 below:



Figure 2. watch a street interview video in the part Sharing.

Next, students will engage in some audiovisual comprehension exercises in which the videos are broken down into smaller segments to help them understand the content. For example, after the previous activity in Unit 3, students are asked to look at the people

on the right and read the statements. Then, they watch Part 2 of the podcast and match statements 1-8 to the people A-H, as shown in Figure 3.

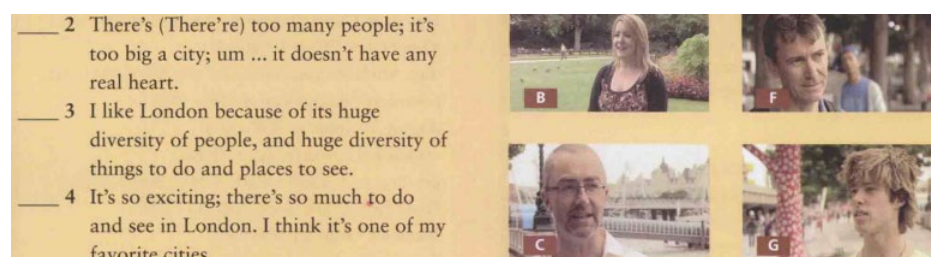


Figure 3. Audiovisual comprehension exercises in the part Sharing.

As for the audiovisual comprehension exercises, they involve various communication strategies, such as "um... it doesn't have any real heart" and "it was a good example of, sort of, British...". In these sentences, time-gaining strategies are used, which can help students improve their strategic competence.

After that, the editor designs a section for word and cultural annotations, and the example in Unit 3 can be seen in Figure 4. This helps learners understand the listening text better [11]. Moreover, cultural background and vocabulary learning are closely linked [6]. The background knowledge and vocabulary provided by the editor are crucial for understanding the overall story or content. Therefore, the annotated section offers more background information and explanations to help the reader better understand and appreciate the video. Furthermore, annotated profiles facilitate cross-cultural communication [12]. When learners watch a foreign video, understanding the cultural background and language use of the other side is essential. This can help students better understand and respect the culture and way of thinking of others. The annotated sections provide such information, which can assist students in better understanding other cultures and languages, thus promoting cross-cultural communication and understanding. This activity is well designed to help students improve their linguistic and sociocultural competencies.

Culture notes	New words
<p>Waiting for Godot: an absurdist play (荒诞剧) in which two characters wait for the arrival of someone named Godot, who never shows up. It was voted one of the most significant plays of the 20th century in the English language.</p> <p>Tate Modern: a modern art gallery in London. It holds the national collection of British art from 1500 to the present day and international modern and contemporary art. Visitors can see amazing works there for free by world famous artists such as Picasso (毕加索).</p> <p>Hyde Park: one of the largest parks in central London and one of the Royal Parks of London. It is famous for its Speakers' Corner (演讲角), where it has been a focus for free speech and debate.</p> <p>Wimbledon: the oldest tennis tournament (锦标赛) in the world. It has been held in Wimbledon, London since 1877. It is one of the four tournaments that make up the Grand Slam of tennis (大满贯网球赛) and the only one still played on natural grass.</p>	<p>Part 3</p> <p>Oasis /əu'eɪsɪs/ 绿洲乐队 (乐队名)</p> <p>the Roundhouse /ðə 'raʊnd, haʊs/ 圆屋剧场 (伦敦)</p> <p>pass n. 通行证; 出入证</p> <p><i>Waiting for Godot</i> /ˌweɪtɪŋ fɔː gə'dəʊ/ 《等待戈多》(荒诞剧名)</p> <p>the National (Theatre) 英国国家剧院</p> <p>Hampton Court /'hæmptən, kɔːt/ 汉普顿宫 (伦敦)</p> <p>King Henry VIII 亨利八世国王</p> <p>Tate Modern /'teɪt, mɒd(ə)n/ 泰特现代美术馆 (伦敦)</p> <p>boundary /'baʊnd(ə)rɪ/ n. 界限; 范围</p> <p>display /dɪ'spleɪ/ n. 展览; 陈列</p> <p>traditional /trə'dɪʃn(ə)l/ a. 传统的</p> <p>gig /gɪg/ n. (尤指爵士或流行音乐的) 演奏会, 演唱会</p> <p>Hyde Park /haɪd 'pɑːk/ 海德公园 (伦敦)</p> <p>Wembley /'wembli/ 温布利球场</p> <p>Brixton /'brɪkstn/ 布里克斯顿 (伦敦)</p> <p>Brockwell Park /'brɒkwel, pɑːk/ 布罗克韦尔公园 (伦敦)</p> <p>Wimbledon /'wɪmbldən/ 温布尔登网球公开赛</p> <p>Andy Murray /ˌændi 'mʌrɪ/ 安迪·穆雷 (英国网球运动员)</p>

Figure 4. words and cultural annotation part in Sharing.

For the final Sharing activity, the editors designed several spoken language output activities that allow students to engage in group discussions based on their own experiences. For example, in Unit 3, the editor provides two questions for students to answer: "Which city did you visit recently? What was the most exciting thing you did there? Have you ever been to London? If yes, how did you like it? If no, what would you like to see if you go there?" The reason for this design is that listening and speaking are closely related skills. Students can better practice their verbal expression and listening comprehension by participating in oral output activities. In addition, oral output activities help students understand practical language application scenarios and enhance their communication abilities and language awareness. The design of this activity also helps students improve their discourse and actional competence.

Overall, the design of Sharing is consistent with the theory of communicative competence. By creating connections between activities, it can reasonably and effectively improve students' communicative competence.

3.2.2. Listening in Listening to the World

In this part, the editor divides it into three sections: Before Listening, While Listening, and After Listening. First, in the "Before Listening" section, pictures and questions are mainly used to introduce the topic and stimulate learners' interest in the lesson. For example, in Unit 4, the editor provides three pictures of different modes of transportation and asks students to look at the pictures and match the following titles 1-3 to the pictures A-C, as shown in Figure 5.



Figure 5. Before listen activities in Listening in Listening to the world.

Then, students are asked to listen to a museum guide introduce three transportation ideas. Before listening, they need to ask themselves what information might be presented in the recording and write down at least four questions. As for the design of the activity, first, pictures and engaging questions are used to capture the students' attention and enhance their interest and enthusiasm in the listening material. Second, the editor's design of pre-listening activities helps students understand the topic, content, and linguistic style of the listening material, thereby setting their expectations for the listening task. This approach helps them better comprehend the listening material and meets the "discourse competence and sociocultural competence" aspects of communicative competence [13].

As for the "While Listening" part, it first provides learners with new words and cultural annotations, similar to the Sharing section, which is designed to help students im-

prove their linguistic and sociocultural competencies. After that, the editor designs relevant listening exercises. For example, in Unit 4, the editor asks students to listen to the recording and write down the answers to the information questions they previously asked. Then, they are asked to work in pairs, compare their questions and answers, and identify which question was not answered in the recording (Figure 6).

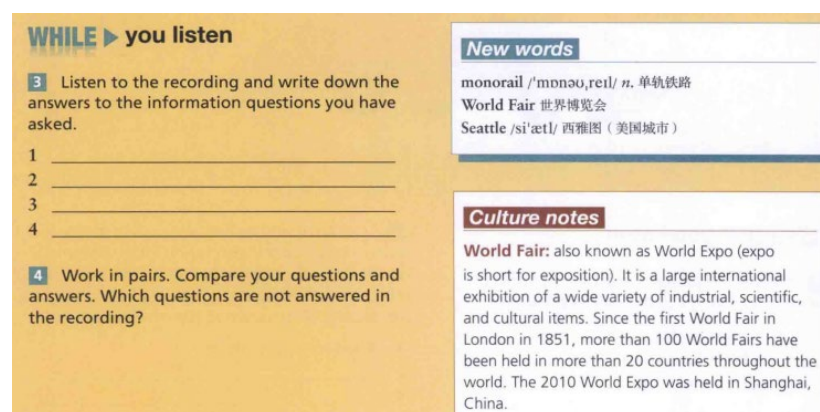


Figure 6. The activities of while listening section.

As for the design of these listening exercises, it helps learners improve their listening skills. Learners need to listen carefully to the material and answer the questions based on the requirements. Through continuous listening practice, learners can gradually enhance their listening abilities, enabling them to better handle listening challenges in various tests or real-life language communication. This approach effectively helps improve students' linguistic competence, discourse competence, and actional competence.

Finally, there is the "After Listening" section. In this section, the main activity design involves group activities. The editors have included several discussion activities based on the listening topics. In Unit 4, students are initially asked to work in pairs to discuss the question, "What do you like about each idea mentioned in the recording? Why?" Following this, they are instructed to examine pictures of transportation inventions (Figure 7) in groups and identify two issues with each invention. For example: "The Horseless Sulky – It's not safe."

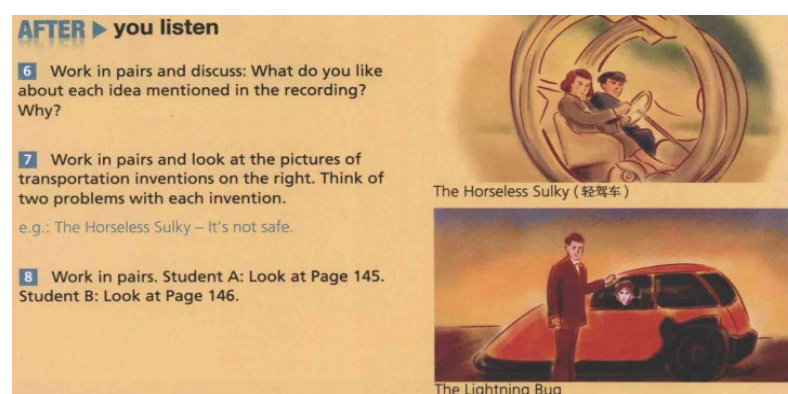


Figure 7. The activity of after listen.

The editors designed the activity to allow students to listen to others more often, thereby improving their listening skills. By listening and answering the questions, students can enhance their understanding and comprehension of the listening materials. Additionally, some of the learned words and phrases may be used in the group discussions. Through repeated practice, students can deepen their understanding and proficiency with these words. Group discussions also help students better understand how to socialize and

improve their communication skills and self-confidence. During the discussion, students can learn how to offer their own opinions, express their thoughts, listen to others' opinions, and provide feedback. This aligns with the theory of communicative competence. In general, this part of the listening section is consistent with the communicative competence principle.

3.2.3. Viewing in Listening to the World

In the viewing section, the editor also divides it into before viewing, while viewing, and after viewing. The videos in this section are all selected from original BBC video material to showcase the vast world and diverse cultures, allowing students to experience social vignettes and exotic features. This helps students broaden their horizons, enhance cultural understanding, and improve cultural communication. As mentioned above, the use of authentic materials can help students understand and improve their reasoning skills [9]. The book's selection of video topics is extensive, including interviews, narratives, research reports, and more. This variety helps students access different language registers in various language contexts and improve their discourse competence, linguistic competence, and strategic competence.

Before viewing, the focus is mainly on reading. Students are given a background introduction to the topic and an explanation of new vocabulary. They are then asked to answer relevant questions after reading the information provided. In Unit 5, students are asked to read the program details and respond to the questions provided below (Figure 8):

BEFORE ▶ you view

1 Read the program information below and answer the questions.

- Where did Diego Maradona start his career?
- What sports are popular in Argentina?
- What will be strongly recommended if one wants to eat something in Buenos Aires?

New words

Diego Maradona /di:'eigəu mə're,də'nə/ 迭戈·马拉多纳 (阿根廷球星)

Argentina /,ɑ:dʒən'ti:nə/ 阿根廷 (南美洲国家)

Buenos Aires /,bwenəs 'aɪərɪz/ 布宜诺斯艾利斯 (阿根廷首都)

Nicki Chapman /,nɪki 'tʃæpmən/ 尼基·查普曼

avenue /'ævə,nju:/ *n.* 大道; (尤指) 林荫大道

La Boca /lə 'bɔ:kə/ 拉博卡 (布宜诺斯艾利斯的一个区)

legend /'ledʒ(ə)nd/ *n.* 传奇人物

tango /'tæŋɡəu/ *n.* 探戈 (舞)

polo /'pəʊləu/ *n.* 马球 (运动)

Argentinian /,ɑ:dʒən'tɪniən/ *a.* 阿根廷的

lane /leɪn/ *n.* 车道

metropolis /mə'trɒpəlɪs/ *n.* 大都会; 大城市

Spaniard /'spænjəd/ *n.* [过时] 西班牙人

passionate /'pæʃ(ə)nət/ *a.* 感情热烈的

Latin /'lætɪn/ *n.* [过时] 拉丁美洲人

Juan /hwa:n/ 胡安

Gada /'ga:də/ 加达

BBC

Holiday 10 Best

In the last of 10 programs looking at exciting holidays, Nicki Chapman takes us on a quick tour of Argentina's capital Buenos Aires. She starts her tour at the amazing Avenue 9th July, and then visits La Boca, where football legend Diego Maradona started his career. She also watches people dance the tango, tries the popular sport of polo and eats some famous Argentinian beef.

Figure 8. Before viewing part of Listening to the world.

In this activity, the editor aims to integrate the reading and listening sections. This approach helps students improve their communication competence. When students learn a listening text by both reading and listening, they not only gain knowledge of the language but also understand how language is used in different situations and how various cultures differ. This helps students better adapt to different language environments and improves their discourse and sociocultural competence.

For the while viewing part, the exercises are designed for specific videos. For example, in Unit 5, the editor provides two exercises based on the video being played, which students are asked to complete while watching. The exercises are as follows:

- 1) Read the words/names and their descriptions. Then watch the video clip and match the words/names 1-6 to the descriptions a-f.

- 2) Read the statements. Then watch the video clip again and fill in the blanks with what you hear.

These questions are designed in a reasonable progression, from easy to hard. This approach helps activate relevant prior knowledge, allowing students to fully understand and explore the content of the video. By completing the exercises, they acquire relevant language knowledge and connect it to the group discussion, which further enhances their communicative ability [14].

The after viewing section is mainly divided into two parts: the group discussion and the writing section. In the group discussion part, for example, in Unit 5, the editors ask students to work in pairs and discuss questions like: "What do you think are the two most interesting things to do or see in Buenos Aires? Do you think Buenos Aires is a good place for a holiday? Why or why not?" Group discussions, as mentioned earlier, are very helpful for students to engage in extensive thinking and oral output training, thereby improving their communication competence.

In the second activity, students are asked to write a paragraph of 80 to 100 words about Buenos Aires for a travel website. This exercise helps students communicate with each other, enhancing their linguistic and discourse competence.

Overall, the viewing section aligns with the theory of communicative competence.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

In summary, the analysis of the listening section in the *New Horizon College English: Viewing, Listening & Speaking* textbook shows that the activities align well with the theory of communicative competence. Through a selection of diverse listening resources from the BBC, ranging from easy to challenging exercises, along with group discussions, students are effectively supported in improving their discourse competence, linguistic competence, actional competence, sociocultural competence, and strategic competence. The inclusion of authentic materials, cultural context, and language skill exercises helps students broaden their perspectives, enhance their listening comprehension, and develop their language expression abilities.

However, since the textbook is primarily intended for first-year English majors, some of the listening materials may be too challenging for them. Additionally, the number of listening questions in the book might be overwhelming for students. Therefore, future editions of the textbook could consider adjusting the difficulty of the listening materials according to the students' language proficiency and optimizing the quantity and type of exercises to better support their learning process.

Overall, the textbook provides a well-rounded listening learning framework based on the theory of communicative competence, which effectively contributes to the improvement of students' comprehensive language abilities. In the future, further adjustments to material difficulty and exercise design could enhance the learning experience and outcomes for students.

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