

ARTICLE

A Mixed-Methods Study on Advancing Critical Listening in English Language Teaching: Project-Based Interview Tasks in the Uzbek Undergraduate Context

Nargiza Khodjakulova ^{1*} , Barnokhon Samatova ¹ , Nodira Khodjakulova ² 

¹ Department of Teaching Theory and Methodology, Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers, National Research University, Tashkent 100174, Uzbekistan

² Department of Hydraulic Facilities and Engineering Structures, Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers, National Research University, Tashkent 100174, Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT

This study examines the effectiveness of interview-based project learning in developing critical listening skills among undergraduate EFL students at universities in Uzbekistan. Although such skills are crucial for academic achievement and communication, they are often neglected due to traditional approaches emphasizing repetition and bottom-up comprehension while overlooking higher-order analytical and reflective listening processes. To address this gap, the study implemented a three-stage instructional model built around structured interview tasks: (1) analysis of authentic interviews, (2) student-designed and conducted interviews, and (3) peer evaluations using rubrics focused on critical listening indicators. The research was conducted with 120 philology students across four universities and employed a mixed-methods design. Quantitative data were collected through pre- and post-tests measuring inference, analysis, and evaluative sub-skills, while qualitative insights were obtained from semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. Three research questions guided the study: the impact of interview-based projects on critical listening sub-skills, the contribution of structured tasks to reflective and analytical listening, and student and teacher perceptions of the approach. Findings indicated significant

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Nargiza Khodjakulova, Department of Teaching Theory and Methodology, Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers, National Research University, Tashkent 100174, Uzbekistan; Email: n_xodjakulova@tiiame.uz

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 28 July 2025 | Revised: 1 September 2025 | Accepted: 12 September 2025 | Published Online: 11 November 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i12.11324>

CITATION

Khodjakulova, N., Samatova, B., Khodjakulova, N., 2025. A Mixed-Methods Study on Advancing Critical Listening in English Language Teaching: Project-Based Interview Tasks in the Uzbek Undergraduate Context. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*. 7(12): 698–709. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i12.11324>

COPYRIGHT

Copyright © 2025 by the author(s). Published by Bilingual Publishing Group. This is an open access article under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).

gains in learners' ability to critically analyze spoken input and make evidence-based judgments. Both students and teachers expressed positive views of the model, emphasizing its effectiveness and relevance to contemporary EFL contexts. The results highlight the pedagogical value of integrating project-based and communicative approaches in language teaching. Structured interview tasks not only foster critical listening but also enhance digital competencies, offering a strong alternative to conventional listening practices in Uzbekistan's higher education system.

Keywords: Critical Listening Skills (CLS); Project-based Learning (PBL); Interview Tasks; EFL Pedagogy; Higher Education; Digital Literacy; Uzbekistan

1. Introduction

In recent years, demand for solid English language teaching has increased significantly, especially in Uzbekistan's higher education scene. Reforms there are trying to match up with worldwide academic and job standards. A key aspect of this involves pushing critical listening skills, you know, the kind where learners actively make sense of, judge, and react to what people are saying out loud. It's like a higher-level brain thing that lets students not just get the words but figure out what the speaker really means, spot any biases, weigh arguments, and draw smart conclusions. Folks like Field back in 2008^[1] and Vandergrift with Goh in 2012^[2] talked about this a lot. These skills matter big time for EFL students facing academic talks, cross-culture chats, and the whole global info economy deal. However, in Uzbekistan, critical listening just isn't getting much play in national plans or actual classes.

According to the Philology and Language Teaching Qualification Standard (Standard number: 60230100), which shapes undergrad EFL programs in Uzbekistan, listening comprehension gets a nod as basic language know-how. Critical listening though, it isn't spelled out or turned into real teaching goals. The standard hits on language and cultural stuff hard, but skips strategies for guessing meanings, judging content, or breaking down talks. Same goes for task-based or communicative listening approaches, which are key in modern EFL teaching. They're pretty much missing from the outcomes and how they test things.

This lines up with what's in the syllabus for Oral Speech Practice that oral speech practice courses in the philology lineup. It pulls in a bunch from Communicative Language Teaching, like pair work that's interactive, presentations, and content tied to culture. Still, there's no real setup for building critical listening on its own. Focus stays mostly on smooth

speaking, beefing up vocab, and sharing views, with not much on tasks that evaluate or interpret what you hear. Although the course includes individual and group presentations, such as reflections on TED Talks or making multimedia posters, these aren't tied into a full Project-Based Learning setup. Nor do they zero in on listening through ongoing questions and teamwork.

From this curriculum check, a gap stands out clearly as day. Listening gets some airtime, but teaching critical listening stays hidden, all over the place, and unchecked. Plus, students get nudged to talk out ideas, but rarely learn to really dig into spoken stuff critically, analyze talks, or think back on their own listening tricks. Students in Uzbekistan facing more pressure to hit global communications and digital skills marks, this feels like a big chance slipping away.

So this study steps in with a three-part, interview-driven project model to grow critical listening via real, chatty tasks. It covers analyzing actual interview clips, then planning and running student-led interviews, and finally judging peer ones with a rubric built around critical listening skills. Drawing from PBL and CLT ideas, it gives learners real-deal talk exposure while building up advanced listening, teaming up, and self-checking. The research uses a mixed-methods setup with 120 undergrads from four Uzbek unis, checking how this teaching tweak affects their critical listening growth and what they think of the whole experience.

In the end, this work aims to add to EFL teaching in Uzbekistan both in theory and practice, offering a model that fits the current setup and fills listening holes. It pushes for adding CLS-centered, project-style tasks into national and school plans, helping EFL folks build the interpreting, analyzing, and reflecting chops needed for school wins and job talks in a world that's getting more tangled all the time.

Supplementary Research Integration. The study by Khodjakulova and Miceikiene from 2024, *The Effective-*

ness of Environmental Sustainability in the Development of Teacher Creativity and Student Engagement Skills, tries to tackle a gap by looking at how environmental sustainability boosts critical listening in students^[3].

Building on their earlier stuff, which dug into sustainability sparking teacher creativity and student buy-in, this one takes it further by linking those themes to critical listening growth. By weaving in eco-focused bits into interview projects, it works to build not just language and thinking skills, but also awareness of social and environmental issues for EFL learners. Mixing real global topics like sustainability into language lessons sparks deeper thinking, moral calls, and sharp listening, turning learning into something more real and across fields.

2. Literature Review

The thing about developing critical listening skills in EFL teaching these days, you know, it's really turned into this big deal, especially up in higher education spots where students have to deal with all that tricky spoken stuff in academic talks, work settings, and even cross-cultural chats. Critical listening isn't just sitting there and getting the basics, I mean, it goes way deeper into things like figuring out meanings, making inferences, checking out what the speaker really wants or how they're arguing, and then coming up with your own take on it all, like Field pointed out back in 2008^[1] or Vandergrift and Goh in 2012^[2]. You need these skills not only to get good at the language but also to build up that critical thinking side, plus academic reading smarts and learning on your own. Still, in places like Uzbekistan, a lot of classrooms stick to those old-school, one-way teaching ways, and there's not much in the curriculum to push for it properly.

Scholars now see critical listening as a key part of being able to communicate well. Anderson and Krathwohl^[4] updated Bloom's taxonomy in 2001, and it shows how this kind of listening hits those higher levels, like analyzing, evaluating, and even creating ideas, which helps make students more thoughtful and in control of their own learning. It fits right in with what folks need for 21st-century jobs and school in diverse, multilingual worlds. But yeah, Wilson in 2008^[5] and Nunan in 2003^[6] said it, a ton of EFL listening lessons still focus on bottom-up stuff, using those scripted audio

clips that just aim for basic understanding instead of really digging into interpretation or analysis.

Research in EFL teaching shows pretty clearly how Communicative Language Teaching, or CLT, can help build critical listening if you do it right. CLT pushes for real materials, actual interactions that mean something, and activities centered on the students, all of which set up a good spot for getting better at interpreting and judging what you hear, as Richards noted in 2006^[7] or Littlewood in 2004^[8]. Although CLT gets mentioned a lot in policies and teacher training, when it comes to listening classes, it often lacks sufficient. So listening ends up feeling like this passive thing in many EFL rooms, which stops the chance to grow those critical skills.

An examination of the curriculum in Uzbekistan further supports this observation. If you check out the 60230100 Philology and Language Teaching Qualification Standard, listening gets called a main skill, but critical listening isn't spelled out as a goal, and there are no ways to test it that match its brainy side. Same deal with course outlines like the Oral Speech Practice one, it puts a lot on speaking smoothly and giving presentations, but skips over planned teaching or checks for critical listening. Although some CLT bits show up, like working in pairs or group talks, they're not tied straight to improving listening, and they don't push for thinking about your own process or judging analytically, according to Khodjaqulova in 2024^[9].

Plus, most studies out there use qualitative methods or ones where they try out new stuff in class, but they don't stretch into bibliometric or scientometric looks at the big picture. Bibliometrics have caught on in other areas like water management or logistics, see Kannazarova and others in 2024^[10], and Mardieva in 2024^[11], but in language teaching, especially for critical listening research, it's barely used. That means it's hard for researchers to map out trends in ideas, who works with whom, or what institutions are doing, in any organized way.

To fix that, more folks are pushing for Project-Based Learning, or PBL, as a game-changer in language classes. It comes from constructivist ideas, focusing on asking questions, teamwork, tying things to real life, and letting students run with it, like Thomas said in 2000^[12] or Beckett and Slater in 2005^[13]. For teaching listening, PBL helps get past those boring repeat drills, pulling students in deeper and making

talks more real. Stoller, in 2006^[14], talked about how it mixes skills and boosts critical thinking, especially if the projects use genuine, talk-heavy content.

One cool twist on PBL for critical listening is projects built around interviews. Students have to listen to them, do their own, and rate them, which naturally gets them evaluating if speakers are trustworthy, picking up on hidden meanings, and comparing views. And when they assess each other's interviews, it prompts them to develop their own standards for good listening, which involves considering one's own thinking and judging critically, as Goh put it in 2010^[15] or the Willises in 2007^[16]. Basically, these interview projects put CLT and PBL to work in a way that's spot-on for building listening.

Research on this in Uzbekistan is just starting to pop up, but stuff from other countries gives solid proof. Take Nguyen and Balakrishnan in 2020^[17], they saw Vietnamese college kids in peer-reviewed interview projects get way better at critical listening, especially spotting bias or persuasion tricks. Shin in 2021^[18] found that adding digital tools for interview work improved listening overall and got students using self-check strategies like jotting notes, making questions, and reflecting on it.

All in all, the research base is strong for bringing interview-style PBL into EFL teaching to grow critical listening, particularly in spots like Uzbekistan that don't get much attention. By mixing CLT, PBL, and digital skills, and putting listening into organized, student-focused tasks, teachers can fill those old holes in the curriculum and classroom. This setup doesn't just help students become smart about what they hear spoken, it lines up with bigger changes in education for analytical skills, independence, and learning that lasts.

According to the CEFR, evaluating listening comprehension is particularly challenging because these processes are internal, and their assessment depends on observing external behavior. Such behavior can manifest as overt verbal responses (like speaking or writing) or through non-verbal cues. Additionally, the complexity of listening comprehension adds another layer of difficulty in designing tasks that effectively measure these skills.

From an evolutionary perspective, spoken language appeared long before writing. While every community relies on speech, many languages even today lack a written form,

as writing systems only began a few thousand years ago. Although speaking and writing fulfill similar communicative functions, the advent of writing as a cultural technology has deeply impacted cognitive processes, communication, education, and societal development. Human communication originally centered on direct, face-to-face oral interaction. However, with advancements in information technology, the gap between written and oral communication has been minimized, enabling written exchanges to simulate real-time face-to-face interaction.

In face-to-face contexts, listening comprehension is inherently linked to speaking. While listening and reading comprehension share many features, listening has specific challenges that often make its assessment more complex than that of reading comprehension.

Numerous taxonomies developed over the past fifty years have identified a wide array of skills (from 10 to 35) integral to listening comprehension. These taxonomies highlight the importance of various factors, including the characteristics of the spoken text (text types), the listener's skills and knowledge, the situational context (language use domains), and the purposes for listening.

A key consideration in assessing listening comprehension is whether to evaluate it in an interactive format, such as through an interview or discussion, or by having individuals listen to or watch recordings. Other critical factors include the input's length, speed, frequency of exposure, and linguistic characteristics (such as text type and accent).

Since listening comprehension is commonly assessed through tasks involving questions or other items, it's crucial to recognize that item difficulty varies and can be strategically adjusted by modifying both the characteristics of the listening text and the task itself.

Listening is a complex and dynamic cognitive process, rather than a mere passive reception of spoken communication. According to Rivers and Temperley^[19], listening comprehension should be understood as an active process in which individuals construct meaning from a continuous stream of auditory input, utilizing their knowledge of the phonological, semantic, and syntactic structures of the language. O'Malley et al.^[20] Similarly define listening comprehension as an active process whereby individuals selectively focus on particular aspects of auditory input, derive meaning from the discourse, and integrate it with their pre-existing

knowledge. Vandergrift^[21] further elaborates that listening involves a complex set of tasks, including the discrimination of sounds, understanding vocabulary and grammatical structures, interpreting prosodic features such as stress and intonation, retaining information, and contextualizing it both within the immediate discourse and the broader sociocultural framework of the utterance. Listening comprehension is a conscious and dynamic activity that allows learners to construct understanding through cognitive processes and contextual interpretation. Extensive research underscores the pivotal role of listening comprehension in language pedagogy, with Dunkel^[22] asserting that it has become a central focus in the development of second language acquisition theory, teaching methodologies, and empirical research.

The Listening Process, according to Lynch^[23], is an ongoing process where listeners actively build and adjust their

understanding of spoken language in a specific context. This process involves interpreting acoustic signals and making sense of them using various cognitive resources, such as prior knowledge and context, to achieve a clear communicative goal. Listening is essential in all forms of communication and occurs repeatedly in every interaction. As such, it is a crucial element of language learning, helping learners exchange information effectively and respond appropriately in conversations. The importance of listening in language education lies in its role in developing both comprehension and communication skills.

In **Table 1**, we can see the history of listening comprehension in language learning has evolved significantly from the 1940s to the present, shaped by various educational theories and instructional approaches:

Table 1. Listening comprehension history.

Time Period	Key Concepts	Instructional Focus	Major Theories/Models	Key Developments
Pre-1940s–1940s	Listening defined as message transmission and recreation.	Assumed that exposure to language would lead to mastery in listening skills.	Initial simplistic view of listening as a passive skill.	Listening was not yet considered a prominent skill. Exposure was believed to naturally lead to comprehension.
1960s	Influence of behaviorism. Listening defined as analyzing and classifying input.	Focus on perception and decoding phonemes, word stress, and sentence-level intonation. Drills for sound discrimination.	Audiolingual Method: Listening was taught through drills and repetitive tasks.	Listening was seen as a mechanical process. The osmosis approach: learners improve listening skills by constant exposure to the language without direct instruction.
1970s–1980s	Listening defined as interpreting the cultural significance of speech behavior.	Focus on responding to spoken texts in contextually and socially appropriate ways. Authentic recordings and expert interaction.	Interactionist & Sociolinguistic Movements: Emphasis on cultural context and interaction in language comprehension.	Listening instruction incorporated real-world input like learner dialogues, face-to-face talk, and authentic recordings. Strategy-based learning emerged.
1990s	Listening as parallel processing of input.	Focus on communicative interaction and strategies for comprehension. Emphasis on authentic listening experiences.	Comprehensible Input (Krashen), Total Physical Response (Asher) ^[25] , Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).	Shift to viewing listening as parallel processing. CLT methodology emphasized listening as key for communication. Social-cognitive models of comprehension.
Post-1990s	New models of listening comprehension introduced.	Focus on strategic listening, coping with comprehension challenges.	Ongoing development of models that describe listening comprehension. Social-Cognitive Models.	Continuous refinement of theoretical models explaining listening comprehension.

Pre-1940s–1940s: Listening was seen as a passive skill, primarily defined by message transmission and recreation. The assumption was that exposure to language would natu-

rally lead to mastery of listening skills.

1960s: Under the influence of behaviorism, listening was framed as a process of analyzing and classifying input.

Instruction focused on phonemes, stress, and intonation, with drills designed to improve sound discrimination. Listening skills were expected to develop naturally through constant exposure (the “osmosis” approach), with little direct teaching.

1970s–1980s: Listening began to be defined as the interpretation of speech behavior, influenced by interactionist and sociolinguistic theories. Instruction focused on contextually appropriate responses to spoken texts, with an emphasis on authentic materials like recordings and learner interactions. Researchers recognized that effective language learners used strategies to acquire listening skills.

1990s: Listening was viewed as parallel processing of input, influenced by Krashen’s theories of comprehensible input^[24] and Asher’s^[25] total physical response method. The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodology highlighted the importance of listening for real-world communication. The need for strategic listening to improve comprehension became more prominent.

Post-1990s: New models continued to refine the understanding of listening comprehension, incorporating social-cognitive approaches. There was an increasing focus on teaching listening strategies to cope with comprehension challenges and enhance learning outcomes. Listening comprehension has shifted from a passive, mechanical process to

an active, strategic skill that requires contextual and cultural understanding, social interaction, and targeted instructional strategies.

Besides, we should also analyze another important phenomenon in the history of listening, it is about the stages of listening that were developed by Anderson^[4] which is given in **Figure 1**.

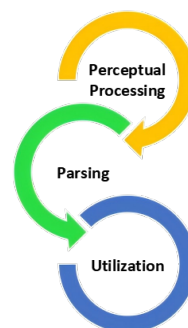


Figure 1. The categorization of Anderson's Three Stages of Listening Comprehension^[4].

Table 2 describes how listening comprehension involves a series of connected stages, from processing sounds to making meaningful associations with prior knowledge. To analyze Anderson’s^[4] Three Stages of Listening Comprehension, we can break down each stage's function, relevance, and implications for language learning.

Table 2. The Description of Anderson's Three Stages of Listening Comprehension^[4].

Stage	Description	Key Concepts	Influencing Factors
Perceptual Processing	Focuses on attention to sounds stored in echoic memory. Listeners identify meaningful sounds and keywords, guided by contextual information.	Attention, echoic memory, meaningful sounds, contextual cues	Quality of input, attention, linguistic knowledge
Parsing	Listeners convert words into meaningful mental representations to retain in short-term memory.	Mental representation, short-term memory (STM), linguistic knowledge	Quality of input, linguistic knowledge, topic familiarity
Utilization	Listeners associate incoming information with existing knowledge stored in long-term memory (LTM), constructing meaning based on this knowledge.	Long-term memory (LTM), schemata, propositions, activation of knowledge	Existing knowledge, schemata, long-term memory activation

1. **Perceptual Processing:** In this stage, listeners focus on important sounds, keywords, and context to aid in meaning construction. Attention and memory play key roles here. “Implication,” which means effective listening requires focused attention and good auditory memory, with input quality influencing comprehension.

2. **Parsing:** The listener transforms sounds into mental representations stored in short-term memory. The listener’s linguistic knowledge and familiarity with the topic affect how well they process this information. “Implication,” which means vocabulary and topic familiarity are crucial for understanding spoken language.

3. Utilization: Listeners connect the incoming information to existing knowledge stored in long-term memory, using schemata and prior knowledge to make sense of the message. “Implication,” which means background knowledge is essential for effective comprehension, and this stage emphasizes the importance of activating prior learning. Overall, the model highlights the cognitive processes involved in

listening, suggesting that language teaching should focus on improving attention, vocabulary, and background knowledge to enhance listening comprehension.

Furthermore, there are three scholars’ concepts which also influence on listening comprehension development. They are given in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Three key concepts of listening.

Model	Key Components	Explanation
McLaughlin et al.'s Attention Processing Model ^[26]	Attention Category: Focal and Peripheral attention Processing Category: Controlled and Automatic processing	Learners actively organize incoming information using cognitive schemata. Attention is divided between the main idea and other message characteristics. Processing moves from controlled to automatic over time.
Bialystok's Model of Explicit and Implicit Knowledge ^[27]	Levels: Input, Knowledge, Output Types of Knowledge: Explicit linguistic knowledge, Implicit linguistic knowledge, Other knowledge	Listening comprehension starts with input exposure, followed by the storage of explicit and implicit linguistic knowledge. Explicit knowledge protects new information, while implicit knowledge serves as a working system.
Nagle and Sanders' L2 Listening Comprehension Model ^[28]	Components: Prior knowledge from long-term memory, New incoming information	Comprehension is seen as a reciprocal process where meaning is constructed from both new input and prior knowledge, drawing on theories from Krashen, Bialystok ^[24,27] , and McLaughlin ^[26] .

3. Methodology

This study uses a mixed-methods setup, a kind of quasi-experimental, to look into how Project-Based Learning with interview tasks affects Critical Listening Skills for undergrad EFL students in Uzbekistan. You know, the reason for mixing methods like that comes from wanting to check out not just the numbers on learning gains from the whole thing, but also the deeper stuff inside students' heads, like their thoughts and feelings, which you can't really get from stats alone. Basically, folks like Creswell and Plano Clark back in 2018^[29] pushed for this mixed approach to pull together different data and really get what’s going on in education.

3.1. Research Context and Participants

We ran this at four big Uzbek universities that do a lot with foreign languages: TIAME National Research University, Bukhara State Pedagogical Institute, Namangan State Institute of Foreign Languages, and Gulistan State University. They picked those spots on purpose because they focus on communication skills in classes and are open to new ways of teaching English.

Participants were 120 second-year undergrads studying English Philology. All of them had done at least a year of

basic English courses and knew the usual listening exercises. We included only those who signed up for the main listening class that semester. Then we split them randomly into an experimental group of 60 who got the interview PBL stuff, or a control group of 60 sticking with regular textbook listening.

To keep teaching the same across the board, four seasoned English teachers, each with a master's in TESOL or Applied Linguistics at least, got trained on a standard guide for the intervention. They handled both groups and switched around the schools to cut down on any teacher bias.

3.2. Research Design and Intervention Framework

The whole intervention lasted six weeks, slotted right into the normal school schedule. It is built around three main PBL stages, tweaked for building critical listening via interview tasks. This pulls from ideas by Beckett and Slater in 2005^[13], plus the project cycle from Stoller in 2006^[14], covering needs analysis, input, design, execution, presentation, and reflection.

Stage 1—Critical Listening to Authentic Interviews

First off, students listened to real interviews from places like BBC HardTalk, NPR, and Voice of America’s Learning

English. We chose those for matching student interests, clear sound, and clear speaker positions, intentions, and argument styles.

In this part, they did heavy listening exercises to spot main points, what the speakers meant, hidden assumptions, and signs of bias or persuasion. We helped with note templates and guided questions. Teachers led talks after listening to think about how to interpret, logic, and emotional pulls in what the speakers said.

Stage 2—Interview Design and Implementation

Next, students worked in pairs or small groups to make their own interview projects on approved topics like environmental issues, digital skills, gender roles, and cross-cultural talk. They came up with open questions, practiced saying them, and added tricks like rephrasing, clarifying, and follow-up asks.

They did the interviews with classmates or volunteers from other areas or language spots. This got them practicing listening and speaking for real. Teachers gave support with templates, example questions, and peer checklists to make things better and more connected.

Stage 3—Peer Evaluation Using Critical Listening Rubric

The last stage focused on peers checking each other, where students looked at and rated recorded interviews from classmates using a rubric based on key CLS parts. We adapted it from Vandergrift and Goh's 2012^[2] model on metacognitive listening, with criteria like:

- Inference and Interpretation. Did the listener get the hidden meanings right?
- Evaluation of Arguments. Did they check if the claims made sense and were logical?
- Recognition of Bias and Tone. Did they spot emotional or rhetorical tricks?
- Judgment and Reflection. Did they give critical comments or thoughts?
- Doing this peer review sharpened their critical listening and helped them learn ways to watch themselves and get better.

3.3. Instruments

Quantitative Instruments

To check if the intervention worked, we gave a custom pre-test and post-test to both groups. It had multiple-choice

and short answers to test advanced listening, like:

- Spotting speaker bias and assumptions.
- Picking up persuasive words and emotional vibes.
- Checking if arguments and claims hold up.
- Drawing conclusions from what's not said straight.

We tested it first with 30 similar EFL students and fixed it for clearness and reliability. Cronbach's alpha came out at 0.82, so it's pretty solid on reliability.

Qualitative Instruments

To dig into what students really experienced, we did semi-structured interviews with 16 picked students, four from each school, split evenly between groups, plus all four teachers. Questions covered how hard tasks felt, motivation, independence, and whether they thought their critical listening have gotten better. This followed Goh and Vandergrift's 2012^[2] metacognitive ideas.

Besides, two trained observers watched classes and noted engagement, joining in, and strategy use with a checklist. Students kept weekly journals on how their grasp of CLS changed and how they used it.

3.4. Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

We ran the pre- and post-test data through IBM SPSS 26.0. First, means and standard deviations are used to see if the groups started even. Then, paired t-tests were performed inside each group for gains that mattered statistically. An independent t-test compared post scores between the control and experimental groups to see the intervention's effect.

We figured out the effect sizes with Cohen's d for how big the differences were. Set significance at $p < 0.05$.

Qualitative Analysis

For the qualitative bits like interview transcripts, observation notes, and journals, we used NVivo 14 to analyze themes. Followed Braun and Clarke's 2006 steps^[30], familiarizing with data, coding first, making themes, reviewing them, defining, and reporting. Codes were deductive from theories like metacognition, task involvement, peer stuff, and inductive ones that popped up, like anxiety over language, drive, and self-control.

Triangulating from interviews, journals, and observations made findings more trustworthy.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

Before starting, we got approval from the IRBs at all schools involved. Got informed consent from all participants, including permission for recordings and using anonymized quotations in papers. Participants were informed that it wouldn't touch their grades, and they could quit at any time.

Data were coded for anonymity, and all files were stored on secure drives that only the team could access. Kept things confidential following GDPR rules.

3.6. Rationale for Methodology

This method setup rests on social constructivist ideas, where knowledge is built through talking with others and real experiences. PBL with interviews fits that by pushing active work, teaming up, and real talk.

It matches Communicative Language Teaching too, which stresses using language like in life and getting into real discussions, per Richards in 2006^[7]. Interview tasks

mimic everyday chats and build critical understanding, thinking back, and judging, which are key for CLS.

Pulls a lot from Goh and Vandergrift's 2012^[2] model on metacognitive listening, focusing on teaching strategies, self-watch, and reflecting. With journals, peer checks, and prompts, it builds student control and strategy smarts.

Mixing qualitative and quantitative methods makes results stronger and lets us see why the intervention hits different for learners. The triangulation backs solid conclusions on teaching success and growth.

4. Results and Discussion

In **Table 4**, we can see the test results. The test group improved by 14.7 points on average. That means they got much sharper at spotting what speakers really mean. They picked up on biases more easily. Drew better conclusions. Made smarter calls overall. The regular group only went up 4.3 points. Pretty small stuff. Probably just from normal classes.

Table 4. Pre and Post test results.

Group	Pre-Test Mean (SD)	Post-Test Mean (SD)	Mean Gain	t-Value	p-Value
Experimental	58.4 (6.3)	73.1 (5.2)	14.7	6.82	<0.001

The difference between groups was super clear, $p < 0.001$. Cohen's d hit 1.8. That's a big effect. So not just numbers. It mattered for real learning.

This lines up with what Thomas^[12] said back in 2000. He figured projects like this build critical thinking. Keeps kids engaged because it's all about their own work. Beckett and Slater in 2005 talked about how projects push analysis. Students deal with tricky stuff and make real output. In our case, real audio clips, talking to peers, and judging things. That setup pushed deeper understanding.

Moreover, the spread in scores dropped for the test group after. From 6.3 to 5.2 standard deviation. Means everyone improved more evenly. Not just the top kids. Even the ones who struggled before got help.

4.1. Qualitative Findings

We dug into journals, interviews, and teacher notes. Got some deep stuff on how students learned and what they liked about the project. Four main themes popped up. Shows

the real teaching power beyond just tests.

4.1.1. Enhanced Awareness of Listening Strategies

Students said they got better at tricks like guessing from clues. Summing up what they heard. Spotting feelings in voices. Noticing hidden ideas in talk. They blamed it on the direct teaching and thinking time built into the project.

One kid put it like this:

"Before this project, I just listened for answers. Now I ask myself: Why is the speaker saying this? What is their goal? I think more deeply."

That backs Goh from 2010^[15]. He said teaching about your own thinking, showing it and practicing, helps control listening. The project had steps. Analyze talks. Do your own interviews. Judge friends. They used strategies over and over. Stuck with them. Made them notice themselves more.

4.1.2. Authenticity and Motivation

Students kept bringing up how real the tasks felt. Lots said doing actual interviews with buddies or guests made it matter. Added duty. Got them pumped.

“I felt like a real journalist. It was not just practice. It was communication with a purpose.”

Fits with communicative teaching ideas. Richards^[7], in 2006, pushed the use of language in real spots. Authenticity fires up motivation. Especially if it feels like job or life stuff outside class. Jane Willis and David Willis in 2007^[16] said that. Picking their own question topics gave freedom. Made them own it more. Invested.

4.1.3. Peer Learning and Reflection

Having peers score with a critical listening sheet made students think about good listening. Theirs and others. Helped spot strong parts like clear setups. Arguments with proof. And mistakes like fuzzy answers. Bad tone reads.

One said:

“When I watched others interviews and scored them, I learned a lot about what works and what doesn’t. I used their good examples to improve my own answers.”

Peer feedback helps in language learning. Documented a bunch. Ahour and Barzegar in 2015^[31], Brown in 2007 and noted that it builds self-checking. Deeper buy-in to rules. Here, judging others is locked in the standards for them. Helped use in later stuff.

4.1.4. Improved Confidence and Autonomy

Many reported feeling bolder in listening and talking. Said they handled off-script stuff better now. Like interviews or podcasts. Used to scare them. Some started using critical tricks elsewhere. Lectures. News. Class chats.

Now, when I listen to podcasts or lectures, I try to find the speaker’s purpose and analyze what they are trying to convince me.

This self-run vibe means they built habits that stick. Not just for grades. That’s the point of critical listening teaching. Teachers saw it too. More students join in class. Better questions in groups.

4.2. Interpretation and Implications

Numbers and stories together prove that interview projects build critical listening skills for English learners. Unlike old listen-and-get-it drills that stay passive. This had students do analytical listening. Like checking argument power. Evaluative stuff. Judging if speakers are solid. Interactive bits. Like making follow-up questions in talks.

These match real-life school or work talks. Where you had to sort, judge, reply sharp to spoken words.

Supports Stoller since 2006. He said project teaching holds knowledge long-term. Builds brain growth. When students get control and duty. Vandergrift and Goh in 2012 pushed metacognitive listening teaching. Boosts strategy use. Self-control learning. Showed up here big time.

4.3. Practical Implications

From all this, some ideas for English teaching in Uzbekistan or anywhere.

1. Curricular Integration: English plans need built-in projects mixing listening, speaking, and thinking skills. Interviews fit nicely to add real talk to school stuff.

2. Assessment Reform: Old tests just check facts remembered. Better to use do-it assessments. Like peer-scored interviews. Rubrics for critical listening. Gives a fuller view of skills.

3. Teacher Training: Train new and old teachers on making project tasks for critical listening. Help with step-by-step strategy teaching. Guiding think time. Peer feedback setup.

4. Sustainability and Transferability: More studies on if gains last. How they move to other areas? Like reading. Writing papers. Job interviews.

5. Inclusivity and Differentiation: Tweak projects for different levels. With good steps, even basic kids can try lighter critical listening work.

5. Conclusions and Limitations

This study backs up the idea that interview-based project learning works pretty well as a teaching method to boost critical listening skills in EFL settings. This is particularly relevant in higher education contexts in Uzbekistan, where learners got into structured tasks that felt real and cen-

tered on them. They showed real gains in breaking down spoken stuff, spotting biases, and judging things properly. The numbers and the deeper insights both point to how mixing PBL and CLT ideas helps get students engaged. It builds that metacognitive stuff too. Reflective thinking comes along with it.

The work adds to all that talk about shaking up language teaching with real-world communication that fits the context. Interviews demand critical thinking right off the bat. So the study gives a model others can copy. EFL teachers wanting to ditch boring passive listening can use it.

Several limitations should be noted. The whole thing only lasted six weeks. That might not show if skills stick around long-term. The group came from just four universities. It probably doesn't apply everywhere in Uzbekistan or other spots. The rubric for peer checks got tested some. But tweaking it more could make it solid for all kinds of students.

Future research ought to look at longer tracking next, such as over a semester or full year, to see lasting effects of project-based listening. Comparing studies across areas and programs might show what factors make CLS teaching click or not. Additionally, integrating technology, such as podcasts or digital storytelling, could further amp up those modern listening skills even more.

Author Contributions

N.K. (Nargiza Khodjakulova): conceptualization, methodology, investigation, validation, visualization, and software. B.S.: supervision, writing—reviewing and editing. N.K. (Nodira Khodjakulova): writing—original draft preparation, resources and software. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

The research data can be found in Scopus base.

Acknowledgements

This research couldn't have happened without help from a bunch of people and places. First off, big thanks to the folks at Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers National Research University. They gave academic pointers and backed the project all the way.

Shoutout to the English teachers and admin at TIIAME, Namangan State Institute of Foreign Languages, Bukhara State Pedagogical Institute, and Gulistan State University. They made data gathering smooth and shared useful thoughts. Also, super grateful to the 120 philology students who jumped in with energy for those interview projects.

My supervisor Barnokhon Samatova gets special mention. Their advice was spot on, insights cut deep, and encouragement never let up through every part of this. Peers and reviewers chipped in too with ideas to tighten things up and make it clearer.

Finally, family and friends kept me going with their patience. That support was key to finishing.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Field, J., 2008. *Listening in the Language Classroom*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK.
- [2] Vandergrift, L., Goh, C.C.M., 2012. *Teaching and Learning Second Language Listening: Metacognition in Action*. Routledge: New York, NY, USA.
- [3] Khodjakulova, N., Miceikiene, A., 2024. The effectiveness of environmental sustainability in the development of teacher creativity and student engagement skills. *E3S Web Conference*. 574, 07004. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202457407004>
- [4] Anderson, L.W., Krathwohl, D.R., 2001. *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives*. Longman: New York, NY, USA.
- [5] Wilson, J.J., 2008. *How to Teach Listening*. Pearson Education: Harlow, UK.
- [6] Nunan, D., 2003. *Practical English Language Teaching*.

- McGraw-Hill: New York, NY, USA.
- [7] Richards, J.C., 2006. *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK.
- [8] Littlewood, W., 2004. The task-based approach: Some questions and suggestions. *English Language Teaching Journal*. 58(4), 319–326.
- [9] Khodjaqulova N., 2024. Curriculum review of Uzbek EFL syllabi: Gaps in critical listening instruction [unpublished doctoral research manuscript]. Tashkent: National Research University “Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers”: Toshkent, Uzbekistan.
- [10] Kannazarova, Z., Juliev, M., Abuduwaili, J., et al., 2024. Drainage in irrigated agriculture: Bibliometric analysis for the period of 2017–2021. *Agricultural Water Management*. 305, 109118. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.agwat.2024.109118>
- [11] Mardieva, D., Bakiyeva, G., Kannazarova, Z., et al., 2024. A bibliometric review: Interventions for enhancing speaking skills in non-English-speaking contexts. *XLinguae*. 17(4), 195–224. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18355/XL.2024.17.04.12>
- [12] Thomas, J.W., 2000. *A Review of Research on Project-Based Learning*. The Autodesk Foundation: San Rafael, CA, USA.
- [13] Beckett, G.H., Slater, T., 2005. The project framework: A tool for language, content, and skills integration. *English Language Teaching Journal*. 59(2), 108–116.
- [14] Stoller, F.L., 2006. Establishing a theoretical foundation for project-based learning in second and foreign language contexts. In: Beckett, G.H., Miller, P.C. (eds.). *Project-based Second and Foreign Language Education: Past, Present, and Future*. Information Age Publishing: Charlotte, NC, USA. pp. 19–40.
- [15] Goh, C.C.M., 2010. Listening as process: Learning activities for self-appraisal and self-regulation. In: Harwood, N. (Ed.). *English Language Teaching Materials: Theory and Practice*, 1st ed. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK. pp. 179–206.
- [16] Willis, D., Willis, J., 2007. *Doing Task-based Teaching*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK.
- [17] Nguyen, T.T.M., Balakrishnan, K., 2020. Enhancing EFL learners’ critical listening skills through peer-evaluated interview projects. *Asian EFL Journal*. 24(6), 98–117.
- [18] Shin, S., 2021. Digital storytelling and the development of critical listening and reflective skills. *Journal of Language and Technology*. 5(2), 45–62.
- [19] Rivers, W., Temperley, M., 1978. *A Practical Guide to the Teaching of English*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK.
- [20] O’Malley, J.M., Chamot, A.U., Küpper, L., 1989. Listening comprehension strategies in second language acquisition. *Applied Linguistics*. 10(4), 418–437.
- [21] Vandergrift, L., 2004. Listening to learn or learning to listen? *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*. 24, 3–25.
- [22] Dunkel, P., 1991. Listening in the native and second/foreign language: toward an integration of research and practice. *TESOL Quarterly*. 25(3), 431–457.
- [23] Lynch, T., 1996. *Communication in the Language Classroom*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK.
- [24] Krashen S., 1985. *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and implications*. Longman: London, UK.
- [25] Asher, J., 1988. *Learning another Language through Actions: The Complete Teacher’s Guidebook*, 3rd ed. Sky Oaks Production: Los Gatos, CA, USA.
- [26] McLaughlin, B., Rossman, T., McLeod, B., 1983. *Second Language Learning: An Information-processing Perspective*. *Language Learning*. 33(2), 135–158.
- [27] Bialystok, E., 1978. A theoretical model of second language learning. *Language Learning*. 28(1), 69–83.
- [28] Nagle, S.J., Sanders, S.L., 1986. Comprehension theory and second language pedagogy. *TESOL Quarterly*. 20(1), 9–26.
- [29] Creswell, J.W., Plano Clark, V.L., 2018. *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, 3rd ed. SAGE Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
- [30] Braun, V., Clarke, V., 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*. 3(2), 77–101.
- [31] Ahour, T., Barzegar, S., 2015. A Comparative Study of Rehearsal and Loci Methods in Learning Vocabulary in EFL Context. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*. 5(7), 1451–1457. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0507.18>