

Research Article

A Problem-Based Learning Model for Hindi Listening Instruction: A Focus on A2–B1 Learners

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Abstract

This study proposes a problem-based learning (PBL) model for teaching Hindi listening to second-year university learners at the A2–B1 level. Hindi listening classes have long drawn on a range of audio, including films, dramas, news, dialogues, textbook recordings, and machine-translation audio, but the work has usually stopped at checking content or parsing vocabulary and sentence patterns. This study ties listening to authentic problem-solving so that learners experience it not as a plain comprehension drill but as a process of searching for information, negotiating meaning, carrying out a task, and producing an output. To that end it applies the core principles of PBL, namely authentic problems, ill-structured tasks, small-group collaboration, self-directed learning, and the teacher as facilitator, to a Hindi listening class, and it offers problem scenarios and project tasks suited to A2–B1 learners. The study does not test the model in class, but it is useful in setting out a concrete design framework and a direction for developing problems so that PBL can be used in Hindi listening instruction.

Keywords: PBL, problem-based learning, Hindi listening instruction, foreign language education, A2–B1 learners, teaching method

Introduction

Listening is one of the skills a learner most needs in order to understand and respond to a foreign language in real communication. This matters all the more for Hindi, where the sounds, the word order, and the social and cultural context are all unfamiliar to Korean learners. A listening class for such a language should do more than play audio; it should train learners to infer meaning in a real situation and to pick out the information they actually need. In practice, though, university Hindi listening classes tend to rely on textbook audio, film and drama clips, news, short dialogues, YouTube videos, and machine-translation audio, and the work usually stops at repeating after the audio, dictation, checking content, listing vocabulary, and analyzing sentence patterns. This is helpful for basic sound recognition and vocabulary, but it does little to build the ability to gather information from audio, weigh it, and put together a solution in a real situation.

Problem-based learning (PBL) offers one way to address this gap. PBL is a learner-centered method in which learners work from an authentic problem, search out the knowledge and information they need, and reach a solution through small-group work and discussion (Savery, 2006). The problem is the starting point, and the teacher works as a facilitator and guide rather than a transmitter of knowledge. This fits a listening class well, because in real communication listening is itself a kind of problem-solving: the listener sorts out the information needed for a purpose, infers unfamiliar expressions, and reads the speaker's intent and the context instead of translating every sentence exactly.

In language education, PBL has been discussed in connection with motivation, collaborative learning, self-directed learning, and communicative competence (Ansarian & Teoh, 2018). One study reported that problem-based language learning can have a positive effect on learners' listening comprehension, and it suggested letting learners find audio for themselves and shape their own learning instead of working from set texts (Teoh et al., 2019). Listening comprehension is also one of the markers that separate more from less successful language learners (Kurita, 2012). Limited vocabulary, unfamiliarity with accurate pronunciation, and too little listening practice have been pointed out as the main barriers to it (Bano, 2017). A Hindi listening class therefore needs a design that exposes learners to a range of real audio and lets them use it as a resource for solving problems.

This study starts from that concern and proposes a PBL-based listening model for second-year university learners of Hindi at the A2–B1 level. It is not an empirical study that tests the model in

class; rather, it is an exploratory study that draws on existing PBL theory and prior work in language education to propose a workable design for Hindi listening instruction. It does three things. First, it reviews the theoretical features of PBL and how well they transfer to language teaching. Second, it sets out a PBL procedure suited to a Hindi listening class. Third, it offers problem scenarios and project tasks that can be used at different proficiency levels.

2. Theoretical Background

PBL is a teaching method that takes an authentic, complex problem as the starting point for learning. Its core features are learner-centeredness, small-group work, the teacher as facilitator, problems that drive learning, the growth of problem-solving ability, and self-directed inquiry (Barrows, 1996). This shows that PBL is not simply a lesson in solving problems; it is a process in which the problem becomes the means for learners to build and apply the knowledge they need. PBL has likewise been described as a cognitive method that promotes knowledge construction, self-directed learning, and collaborative problem-solving (Hmelo-Silver, 2004).

The nature of the problem is what matters most in PBL. Ill-structured problems are central to problem-solving learning, since they cannot be reduced to a single right answer and allow for several possible solutions (Jonassen, 2000). The problem has also been treated as the device that prompts learners to begin inquiry on their own (Schmidt, 2012). A PBL problem in a Hindi listening class should therefore not be a closed task such as “summarize this recording,” but an authentic, contextualized one, such as “what do you need to listen for in order to handle this situation in India?”

Applying PBL to language teaching has a particular wrinkle: the language is both the object of study and the tool for solving the problem. The difficulty of having learners use a language they have not yet fully acquired in order to learn that same language has been noted (Larsson, 2001). With this in mind, problem-based language learning (PBLL) has been put forward as a version of PBL fitted to language education (Ansarian & Teoh, 2018). This matters for a Hindi listening class. Because A2–B1 learners cannot fully understand every piece of audio, the difficulty of the problem, the length of the material, the vocabulary level, and the form of the output all have to be adjusted with care.

PBL also connects to a social-constructivist view of learning. Project-based language learning has been found to help students develop life skills such as collaboration, communication, and

self-direction (Ghosheh Wahbeh et al., 2021). Combining PBL with collaborative learning can also improve learners' independent study, logical thinking, problem-solving, and motivation (Chang et al., 2022). Group learning works well only when each member contributes to a shared goal (Johnson & Johnson, 1986). In a Hindi listening PBL class, then, it is not enough simply to put learners in groups; roles should be clearly divided, such as listening, vocabulary, cultural information, and presentation, so that members come to depend on one another.

PBL is also meaningful for listening instruction in its own right. Listening comprehension has been treated as an important part of successful second-language learning (Kurita, 2012). Learners' listening difficulties have been tied to limited vocabulary, trouble recognizing pronunciation, and too little listening practice (Lynch, 2011, as cited in Teoh et al., 2019). Many EFL learners are not motivated to improve their listening and do not see themselves as capable listeners (Bano, 2017). Hindi learners can run into much the same trouble. Liaison, fast speech, postpositional structure, agreement in gender, number, and case, colloquial contractions, and the mixing of English, Urdu, and regional languages all add to the listening load for Korean learners. A PBL-based listening class should therefore be built so that learners do not consume audio passively but, in order to solve a particular problem, listen repeatedly and selectively, interpret together, and check the information.

3. A PBL-Based Model for Hindi Listening Instruction

The model proposed here is aimed at second-year university learners of Hindi at the A2–B1 level. Learners at this level have some command of basic sentence patterns, the present, past, and future tenses, postpositions, the imperative, and expressions of possibility and necessity, along with basic vocabulary, but they still struggle with natural speech rates, varied intonation, and the unscripted expressions of films and news. The model is therefore built around purpose-driven listening, grasping key information, inferring from context, and solving problems, rather than full comprehension.

The model has six stages. The first is presenting the problem. The teacher offers a scenario tied to life in India, travel, study abroad, cultural events, understanding the news, popular culture, or administrative tasks. The second is identifying the problem and setting goals. Learners work out what they need to listen for, which expressions and words they need, and what background knowledge they lack. The third is searching for and selecting audio. Alongside what the teacher supplies, learners find and use film scenes, news clips, public announcements, YouTube videos,

machine-translation audio, and recorded dialogues. The fourth is collaborative listening and information extraction. Through repeated listening, learners identify key expressions, places, times, people, requests, emotions, intentions, and the cause of the problem. The fifth is producing a solution or project output. From what they have heard, learners create notices, dialogues, talks, role-plays, short videos, podcasts, study materials, or cultural explanations. The sixth is presentation, feedback, and reflection. Learners present their work, compare it with other groups' solutions, and look back on the strategies they used and the points they found hard.

In this model the teacher is a designer, a facilitator, and a provider of linguistic scaffolding, not a transmitter of knowledge. The teacher designs the problem, selects audio at an appropriate level of difficulty, and, when needed, supplies vocabulary lists, partial scripts, sections for repeated listening, pronunciation cues, and cultural background. At the A2–B1 level in particular, it works better for the teacher to adjust the length and difficulty of the material and to provide questions stage by stage than to ask for fully independent exploration. This is in line with the view that, even though PBL is learner-centered, the teacher's guidance and scaffolding still matter (Hmelo-Silver, 2004).

4. Problem Design and Project Tasks

The most important element in a PBL-based Hindi listening class is the nature of the problem the learners have to solve. An ordinary listening class mostly has learners listen and then choose a correct answer or summarize the content. In a PBL-based class, by contrast, the audio is not the object of assessment in itself; it works as a resource for solving an authentic problem. The problem, then, should not be a simple comprehension check but a task that has learners pull the information they need from Hindi audio and build a real solution.

For A2–B1 learners, the problems here limit complexity while keeping a real connection to communication. Learners draw on films, dramas, news, public announcements, short dialogues, machine-translation audio, and recordings of real speakers to solve them. The teacher is not someone who explains everything, but a facilitator who points out what learners should listen for, which information to confirm, and which expressions they can use.

Table 1. Problem types and project tasks in a PBL-based Hindi listening class

Problem type	Situation	Listening materials	Key listening goal	Project output	Level
Everyday problem-solving	A Korean exchange student at Delhi railway station cannot follow the announcements and misses the platform and departure time.	Station announcements, staff and passenger dialogue, platform audio	Numbers, time, place, delays, departure and arrival details	A Hindi station-use guide for Korean students abroad	A2–B1
Voice-message comprehension	An Indian friend sends a voice message changing the time and place of a meeting; the learner has to work out the details.	Instructor recording, native-speaker audio, machine-translation audio	Time, place, request, what to bring, how to get there	An appointment card and a spoken Hindi reply	A2
Film and drama conflict analysis	Two characters argue over a misunderstanding in a film scene; the learner has to identify the cause and each side's position.	A short film or drama scene	Emotion, intonation, forms of address, negation, cause expressions	A conflict-analysis chart and an alternative dialogue	B1
News reconstruction	The learner has to re-explain an Indian news item in simple Hindi and Korean for Korean students.	A 30-second to 1-minute news clip, easy news video	Who, when, where, what, and why	A simple Hindi news card or a 2-minute explainer video	B1

Restaurant ordering	At an Indian restaurant the learner has to check whether dishes are vegetarian, how spicy they are, prices, and recommendations.	Ordering dialogue, food-introduction video, menu audio	Dish names, prices, preferences, requests, recommendations	A restaurant role-play and a menu recommendation sheet	A2
Campus guidance	Korean students visiting an Indian university cannot follow the Hindi campus directions.	Campus guidance audio, location dialogue	Location, direction, facility names, how to use them	A bilingual campus map	A2–B1
Voice comparison	Beginners are learning pronunciation only from machine-translation audio and have to analyze how it differs from a real speaker.	Machine-translation audio, native-speaker recording	Intonation, speed, pauses, word boundaries, pronunciation differences	A pronunciation comparison guide for beginning listeners	B1
Travel safety	While traveling in India the learner faces a lost phone, finding the way, and using a taxi, and has to build an action guide from the audio.	Lost-item report dialogue, taxi dialogue, direction audio	Asking for help, place, price, direction, describing the problem	A situation-based Hindi phrasebook and role-play	A2–B1

None of these problems calls for a single right answer. In the station problem, for instance, learners do not translate every word of the announcement; they pick out the platform, the time, the train name, and whether there is a delay, as the situation requires. In the film-scene problem, they read not only the literal meaning of the lines but also intonation, emotion, the relationship between the characters, and the cause of the conflict. This shifts listening from checking language knowledge to solving a real problem.

Each project can be run as pre-, while-, and post-listening work. Before listening, the teacher presents the situation and learners sort out the task and the information they need. While listening, groups listen repeatedly, with members taking charge of different items such as time, place, people, key vocabulary, and cultural information. After listening, they put the information together into a solution and present it as a talk, a role-play, a notice, a video, or a card-news piece.

Table 2. Stage-by-stage procedure for a PBL-based Hindi listening class

Stage	Teacher's role	Learner activity	Listening strategy
Presenting the problem	Provides the authentic scenario and basic materials	Understands the situation, forms groups	Activating background knowledge
Identifying the problem	Gives the key questions and output criteria	Lists what they need to know and unfamiliar expressions	Predicting, forming questions
Searching for audio	Adjusts material difficulty, supplies support material	Selects audio, plans repeated listening	Selective listening

Collaborative listening	Provides vocabulary and expression scaffolding as needed	Divides roles, extracts information, checks with peers	Listening for key words and details
Building the solution	Checks direction, gives feedback on errors	Drafts the solution, produces the output	Inferring, summarizing
Presentation and reflection	Gives feedback, applies the rubric	Presents, peer-reviews, reflects	Self-monitoring, strategy reflection

This procedure reflects the need to weigh both the learners' language level and the complexity of the problem when bringing PBL into a language class. For A2 learners it works to narrow the scope of the problem and supply key expressions in advance. For learners closer to B1, news, films, and real conversation can be used to push them to infer from incomplete information, faster speech, and cultural implication.

Audio can be organized in three tiers. The first is controlled material that the teacher creates or adapts; sentence length and vocabulary can be limited, so it suits A2 learners. The second is semi-authentic material edited in part from real sources, such as short scenes from films, dramas, news, and YouTube videos. The third is the natural speech of real speakers, which exposes learners to the speed, intonation, contraction, repetition, and hesitation of real communication and so suits learners at the B1 level.

In the end, the point of a PBL-based Hindi listening class is not to demand that learners understand every piece of audio perfectly. It is that, within their limited language ability, they listen selectively for the information they need, build meaning together with their peers, and put together a solution that fits a real situation. In this sense the approach can develop not only Hindi listening but also self-directed learning, collaboration, cultural understanding, and real communicative ability.

5. Assessment

Assessment should not stop at marking answers right or wrong. It has to take in how learners worked through the problem, not just what they ended up producing. In practice that means weighing five things: how much they understood, how they went about solving the problem, how they worked together, what they made, and what they learned about their own listening.

Listening comprehension comes down to whether learners caught the main points, picked up the details that mattered, worked out meaning from context, and followed what the speaker was getting at. The problem-solving side is about the route they took: where they looked for information, which listening strategies they used, and how the group reached a solution through discussion. Collaboration shows up in the smaller things, like whether a learner kept to their role, helped the others, took different views on board, and did their share of the final product. The output can be judged on whether the Hindi is accurate and natural, whether it shows some thought, and whether it fits the situation. Reflection is a matter of self-awareness, that is, whether learners can say where their listening broke down and what they would try differently next time.

A rubric makes this easier to handle. One workable breakdown is 30 percent for comprehension, 25 percent for the problem-solving process, 20 percent for group work, 15 percent for the output, and 10 percent for reflection. At the A2–B1 level, though, what matters most is whether learners heard and used the information the problem called for, not how grammatically clean their Hindi is.

6. Discussion

A PBL-based Hindi listening class can make up for some limits of the conventional class. First, learners use the audio as a resource for solving a problem rather than listening to it passively, which is in line with the way PBL stresses active participation and self-directed inquiry (Shin & Azman, 2014). Second, learners compare a range of materials, such as films, dramas, news, dialogues, and machine-translation audio, within a real context, which widens the variety of listening input and brings out the difference between real speech and textbook speech. Third, small-group work lightens the listening load, because information one learner misses can be filled in by another, and comprehension can be built socially as members weigh different readings against each other (Johnson & Johnson, 1986).

There are also a few things to watch when designing such a class. First, if the problem is harder than the learners' language level, PBL can become an experience of frustration rather than a source of motivation, so at the A2–B1 level the material should be kept short and the key vocabulary and situational information given in advance. Second, if every problem is left too open, learners may not work out what they are supposed to listen for; the teacher should keep the problem open enough to allow real problem-solving while stating the listening goal and the output criteria clearly. Third, if the teacher hands over too many answers, the self-direction of PBL weakens, but if guidance is too thin, learners fall into linguistic confusion instead of solving the problem. The teacher's role is to facilitate rather than explain, while providing the right scaffolding at the right moment.

7. Conclusion

This study has proposed a PBL-based listening model for second-year university learners of Hindi at the A2–B1 level. Conventional Hindi listening classes have used a range of audio, yet the work has often stopped at checking content and listening again; a PBL-based class differs in that it turns the audio into a resource for solving a real problem. The model set out here runs through presenting the problem, identifying it, searching for audio, collaborative listening, producing a project output, and presentation with reflection. By offering a range of scenarios, such as a station announcement, a voice message, a film conflict, a news clip, a restaurant order, campus directions, a comparison of machine and human speech, and a travel-safety situation, it shows in concrete terms how PBL can be applied in a Hindi listening class.

The study has a clear limit in that the model has not yet been applied in class or tested for its effects. Future work should put the model into an actual Hindi listening class and then analyze, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, learners' listening comprehension, motivation, self-directed learning, sense of collaboration, and any reduction in anxiety. It should also examine which types of problems and materials suit which proficiency levels, and how the teacher's way of providing scaffolding affects listening achievement. Even so, the study is useful in offering a teaching framework for using PBL in Hindi listening instruction.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study, in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data, in the writing of the article, or in the decision to publish the results.

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