

## INNOVATIVE METHODS FOR IMPROVING YOUNG LEARNERS' LISTENING SKILLS

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### Abstract

Listening comprehension is the most important in learning any language. Speaking and writing are often linked to main language usage in language education. Listening and reading skills are ranked second. One of the causes for this might be the difficulties in developing listening skills. This study addresses how to teach listening skills using current approaches. Easy strategies to increase listening comprehension are listed below.

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### INTRODUCTION

Listening is the language modality that is used most frequently. It has been estimated that adults spend almost half their communication time listening, and students may receive as much as 90% of their in-school information through listening to instructors and to one another. Often, however, language learners do not recognize the level of effort that goes into developing listening ability.

Far from passively receiving and recording aural input, listeners actively involve themselves in the interpretation of what they hear, bringing their own background knowledge and linguistic knowledge to bear on the information contained in the aural text. Not all listening is the same; casual greetings, for example, require a different sort of listening capability than do academic lectures. Language learning requires intentional listening that employs strategies for identifying sounds and making meaning from them.

Listening involves a sender (a person, radio, television), a message, and a receiver (the listener). Listeners often must process messages as they come, even if they are still processing what they have just heard, without backtracking or looking ahead. In addition, listeners must cope with the sender's choice of vocabulary, structure, and rate of delivery. The complexity of the listening process is magnified in second language contexts, where the receiver also has incomplete control of the language.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

Mastering a foreign language relies heavily on the development of listening comprehension. There are several interesting methods for mastering listening comprehension skills. We understand that reading skills are more important than listening comprehension skills in foreign language classes, or that reading skills can help us master a foreign language more effectively. However, listening comprehension skills are important for reading comprehension. As a result, we can say that listening comprehension skills form the foundation of language learning. Language learners who struggle with listening comprehension and language skills may experience learning difficulties. The listening process

is more concerned with emotion, sounds, and tone. Vision is the foundation of reading. This means there must be a match between reading and listening comprehension abilities. If reading skills are referred to as indirect communication, then listening is considered direct communication. What issues arise while listening? How do we understand speech? When someone talks about something, we listen and analyse the data. At the same time, we focus on the sentence's structure. Concentration is required in order to comprehend unfamiliar words. However, we do not attempt to understand the message verbatim. Of course, the listening process is not without difficulties. As an example, consider the media and time. Speech problems and difficulties can occur at various speeds. The listener should pay attention to the speaker's pace of speech. Furthermore, difficulties are encountered in understanding dialects. Teachers consistently use literary language. There are numerous techniques for practicing listening comprehension. The methods used in listening comprehension are not limited to the listening process. They are also used in other skills because each skill is practiced independently. Once the listening comprehension text has been developed, speaking skills can be discussed. Early language learners may struggle with this, but teachers will provide opportunities to practise additional skills. In the textbook literature, each topic is covered on the basis of 4 (four) skills. It is natural that language learners are interested in studying the topics on the basis of individual skills. According to Penny Ur there are some problems in listening activity:

1. Trouble with sounds
2. Cannot understand fast, natural native speech
3. Find it difficult to keep up
4. Get tired.
5. Need to hear things more than once
6. Have to understand every word. In order to avoid these possible issues professors of Niagara University made a research and recommended solutions for them:

- Resist distractions. Concentrate on what is said rather than what is going on around you.
- Be willing to take advantage of opportunities. Identify areas of common interest between you and the speaker.
- Consider, "What's in this for me?"
- Be alert. Avoid daydreaming if the speaker's delivery is slow. When your thoughts get ahead of the speaker's words, take the opportunity to evaluate, anticipate, and review what is being said.
- Determine the speaker's purpose and adapt to it. Ask yourself if the speaker's goal is to inform, persuade, or entertain.
- Listen for central themes rather than individual facts.
- Make a plan to report what you hear to someone else within eight hours.
- Improve your note-taking skills.
- As a listener, accept primary responsibility for effective two-way communication.

## RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

Given the importance of listening in language learning and teaching it is essential for language teachers to help their students become effective listeners. In the communicative approach to language teaching, this means modeling listening strategies and providing listening practice in authentic situations: those that learners are likely to encounter when they use the language outside the classroom.

There is a lot to be said for these approaches, and they have certainly been very helpful in spreading a concern for supporting the development of learners' listening skills, rather than just testing them. However, they should not be accepted unquestioningly, or used to the exclusion of other approaches. Let us have a bit of a critical look at them, one by one.

**Suggestion one:** use plenty of recorded material

There are plenty of solid reasons to use recordings. It is a method of introducing diverse voices into the classroom: male and female, different ages, dialects, voice quality, and so on. This implies you may display both dialogue and monologue. If the recording is not scripted and prepared, you have 'genuine'

content (see suggestion 7 below). A recording may be played as many times as desired, and it will sound the same each time. These can all be beneficial.

However, there are several downsides and restrictions. In actuality, the variety of accents on commercially accessible listening material is quite limited. Accents that are similar to British and American standard ones predominate, whereas non-native accents are overlooked, which is a critical issue given that most English learners nowadays engage with other 'non-native' speakers rather than 'natives'. Ideally, listening exercises in the classroom should aim to provide students with the flexibility to deal with a wide range of accents.

Recordings are especially useful for practicing listening in situations where the listener does not have the option to interact with the speaker, such as listening to the radio, hearing public announcements at airports and stations, or eavesdropping on strangers' conversations.

This implies that it would be beneficial to provide students additional opportunities to hear 'live' voices - guests to the class, if possible, or, most obviously, the instructor. This, of course, contradicts advice to 'reduce instructor talking time'. However, the teacher's voice is a neglected resource in providing listening practice in which the speaker can continuously monitor the listeners' interest, attention, and apparent comprehension, adding any necessary repetitions, reformulations, and explanations; and where the listeners can give the speaker signals both nonverbal (e.g., nodding, frowning) and verbal (e.g., "I see", "So, do you mean.....?", "I'm not sure what you mean by....") - so that the listener is not just a passive, more or less successful receiver, but understanding is mutually constructed.

Even for the 'eavesdropping' type of listening, it would probably be more useful and realistic to utilise video recordings rather than simply audio ones, because we can typically see the individuals, we are listening to, whether they're 'live' or on film or television. The visual component contains a plethora of information about the environment, people, and their relationships, without which a listener is badly handicapped. In reality, by denying learners of this visual information, we contribute to their perception that listening is extremely difficult.

Furthermore, significant acoustic information might be lost throughout the recording and, particularly, replay operations, which can make listening more challenging. Of course, listeners must occasionally contend with less-than-ideal acoustic settings, but it is unjust to add too much too quickly to the tough effort that learners encounter when they begin listening to a foreign language.

**Suggestion two:** prepare the learners for listening by creating the scenario, presenting the characters, pre-teaching terminology, and so on. This makes a lot of sense, especially because it helps to compensate for the lack of a visual aspect, and because when we listen, we usually have some prior information, expectations, and predictions about what we'll hear. In other words, it assists listeners in developing a 'schema' that they may use to comprehend what they hear. On the other hand, there are times when we begin listening without the advantage of a schema and must piece together our knowledge of what we're hearing as we go.

For example, we could turn on the radio at random and hear something that sounds exciting, but it's not immediately clear what's going on. Or we may ask someone a question and receive an answer that contradicts our expectations to the point that we are unable to instantly comprehend what we are given. It would appear beneficial to train students to deal with this type of issue. In the classroom, this can involve letting them listen for a short time without any preparation, then asking questions like "Who / Where are the people?", "What are they talking about?", "What are they doing?", and so on. Then letting them hear a little more before asking the same questions again, then letting them hear a bit more before asking the same questions again, and so on; the purpose of the questions, then, is to help them piece together their understanding bit by bit, on the basis of the gradually accumulating evidence of what they hear.

**Suggestion three:** Before the students listen, assign a listening exercise that will guide them to an overall 'gist' comprehension of the piece. The goal is to assist and steer learners' listening, and the suggestions on listening preparation in section 2 above apply here. Furthermore, gist comprehension does not always precede detailed understanding; the 'gist' may arise only after a thorough understanding of the specifics. Teachers frequently advise students that they do not need to comprehend everything, only the major points or key phrases, yet it may be argued that understanding everything is sometimes required in order to know what the important points or key words are!

**Suggestion four:** double-check your answers to this task, and listen the recording again if required. Replaying a recording, potentially several times, is acceptable as a pedagogical tool. However, keep in mind that outside of the classroom, people may only get one opportunity to listen anything and must be content with whatever comprehension they may gain from that one exposure. On other situations, they may seek a repeat listening from a live speaker, but only if the speaker would clarify, paraphrase, and simplify rather than simply repeat.

**Suggestion five:** assign an additional activity, or activities, that will lead learners to a more comprehensive knowledge. As with any teacher-imposed or material-imposed activity, there is a danger of undermining the learners' motivation and interest in what they are listening to. They will frequently be able to create their own listening assignments, which will typically be related to language rather than topic.

**Suggestion six:** Use the tapescript (if there is one!) as a last option. It is rare in L1 hearing to read a transcript of what we hear, whether before, during, or after listening. And plainly, students must have expertise and confidence in listening without the aid of the written word. But this is a gradual process, and there's no reason why that process shouldn't include, especially in the early stages:

- listening once, then using a transcript to clarify points of confusion before listening again.
- reading before listening, to establish understanding of content, before listening to what that content actually sounds like.
- reading and listening simultaneously, tracking the relationship between the spoken and written forms of the language.

**Suggestion seven:** make the recording, and the tasks, as 'authentic' as possible. The concept of 'authenticity' is complicated, and it has been widely discussed from numerous perspectives. Some points that appear pertinent here include the following:

- When a recorded (or written) text is exported outside of its original context, it loses its authenticity. For example, a discussion at a restaurant may be real for the participants, but not for a group of language learners listening in classroom hundreds of miles away and years later.
- Poor recording quality is a common issue with authentic recordings.
- Technical quality alone may not be sufficient for learners due to cultural differences or lack of interest. Even with good preparation and unambitious listening activities, some students may find actual recordings to be extremely challenging, which can have a catastrophic effect on confidence.
- Tasks that replicate outside-of-classroom listening activities may not appear relevant or compelling to students. If you're in Britain or Canada, for example, and you're considering a variety of weekend activities, listening to a weather forecast, paying attention to the outlook for your specific location, and making arrangements accordingly is a true listening exercise.

## CONCLUSION

Finally, it should be noted that this article included various ways and guidelines for improving listening comprehension abilities. There are a few general criteria to follow while teaching listening, regardless

of the approach used. First, don't anticipate tremendous outcomes from the pupils right away, because even the best listener will never recall the lesson entirely and clearly from the first exercises. Second, in order to avoid blunders, it is important to construct questions for students that are not only straightforward but also appropriate for their skills. The third goal is to assist pupils in discovering their unique path and flair.

If these guidelines are followed, kids will improve their listening comprehension skills.

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