



THE TEACHING FEATURES OF LISTENING

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Abstract

The teaching methods of listening are considered in this article. All important features of listening skill are considered and explained perfectly. The importance of listening skill in teaching foreign languages is also studied in this article. The teaching of listening is very important and useful in teaching foreign languages.

Keywords: listening, attention, skill, purpose, sound, response, foreign language

INTRODUCTION

There is an association between expectation, purpose, and comprehension, therefore a purpose should be given to our learners. We should train students to understand what is being said in conversations to get them to disregard redundancy, hesitation, and ungrammaticality. The major problem is the actual way listening material is presented to the students. We should give a clear lead in what they are going to hear; use some kind of visual back up for them to understand; give questions and tasks in order to clarify the things in their minds; and be sure that these tasks help in learning, not confusing. Students should learn how use the environmental clues; the speaker's facial expression, posture, eye direction, proximity, gesture, tone of voice, and that general surroundings contribute information. So, listening is one of the most important skills in teaching foreign languages.

RESULTS AND METHODS

Listening to and understanding speech involves a number of basic processes, some depending upon linguistic competence, some depending upon previous knowledge that is not necessarily of a purely linguistic nature, and some depending upon psychological variables that affect the mobilization of these competence and knowledge in the particular task situation. The listener must have a continuous set to listen and understand, and as he hears the utterance, he may be helped by some kind of set to process and remember the information transmitted. His linguistic competence enables him, presumably, to recognize the formatives of the heard





utterance, i. e. , to dissect out of the wave form of the morphemes, words, and other meaning-bearing elements of the utterance.

Listening is a receptive skill, and receptive skills give way to productive skills. If we have our students produce something, the teaching will be more communicative. This brings us to the must of integrating language skills. There are two reasons for using integrating activities in language classrooms:

1. To practice and extend the learners' use of a certain language structure or function
2. To develop the learners' ability in the use of two or more of the skills within real contexts and communicative frame work.

Integrated activities, on the other hand, provide a variety in the classroom and thus maintain motivation and allow the recycling and revision of language which has already been taught separately in each skill.

How can we be certain that listening experiences will become more productive? Wittich tells us to distinguish the four levels existing in listening to radio or recordings:

- Level 1. This mood is listening. Here, the sound remains in the background - there is usually limited comprehension, and, indeed, limited attention. One becomes directly aware of sounds only when they stop. Nevertheless, a certain amount of learning may take place.
- Level 2. Here the purpose is relaxation, escape, getting your mind off something rather than on it. The material is comprehended but usually not analyzed for its value. This listening may result in useful ideas, but they are usually peripheral and/or accidental.
- Level 3. On this level, answers are sought as a key to action. One listens to weather reports, traffic information from a plane-temporarily useful but what we might call forgettable transient information. This form of listening does not require long, sustained concentration.
- Level 4. This is the stage of analytical and critical listening. The listener not only seeks a serious answer to a serious question but evaluates the quality of the answer. Round-table discussions, serious listening to talks, spirited conversation, symphonic music are at the fourth level. At this stage, listening to music is in the foreground of attention not in the background as on previous levels (Wittich and Schuller, 1962).

In listening activities, we listen for a purpose. We make an immediate response to what we hear. There are some visual or environmental clues as to the meaning of





what is heard. Stretches of heard discourse come in short chunks, and most heard discourse is spontaneous, therefore differs from formal spoken prose in the amount of redundancy 'noise' and colloquialisms, and its auditory character.

In listening to English as a foreign language, the most important features can be defined as:

1. Coping with the sounds,
2. Understanding intonation and stress,
3. Coping with redundancy and noise,
4. Predicting,
5. Understanding colloquial vocabulary,
6. Fatigue,
7. Understanding different accents,
8. Using visual and environmental clues.

This brings us to the thought that, while planning exercises, listening materials, task and visual materials should be taken into consideration. The teacher should produce a suitable discourse while using recordings. A preset purpose, ongoing learner response, motivation, success, simplicity, and feedback should be the things considered while preparing the task. Visual materials are useful for contextualization. We can also categorize the goals of listening as listening for enjoyment, for information, for persuasion, for perception and lastly for comprehension and lastly to solve problems.

We can divide listening for comprehension into three stages;

1. Listening and making no response (following a written text, informal teacher talk)
2. Listening and making short responses (obeying instructions - physical movement, building models, picture dictation. etc.), true- false exercises, noting specific information, etc.
3. Listening and making longer response (repetition and dictation, paraphrasing, answering questions, answering comprehension questions on texts, predictions, filling gaps, summarizing, etc)

The purposes that should be in a listening activity are giving/providing:

1. General information (understanding of the main points)
2. Specific information (understanding of the particular items)
3. Cultural interest (generally informing about the target language culture)
4. Information about people's attitudes and opinions
5. The organization of ideas
6. Sequence of events





7. Lexical items (words expressing noise / movement)
8. Structural items (their use and meaning)
9. Functional items (their form and use)

In order to teach listening skills, a teacher should firstly state the difficulties. For a student of a foreign language, accurate and intelligent listening is a necessity, and the teacher is responsible to help his / her learners to acquire this skill which provides the very foundation for learning and functioning in a language. That the teacher can observe and isolate the errors in speaking, but could not in listening is a difficulty. In listening, the learner can exercise no controls over the structural and lexical range of the speaker to whom he is listening. Nevertheless, any listener can learn to focus on significant content items, to explain in another way he can learn to listen selectively.

Helping the learners to distinguish sounds, teaching to isolate significant content and informational items for concentration may be provided by controlled listening exercises. One exercise is to give him certain performance objectives -to give him general informational questions that he should be able to answer after he listens the material for the first time. These questions should require only the isolation of facts clearly revealed in the material. Questions that require application or inference from the information contained in the listening exercise are best used at later stages or more advanced students.

More controls are necessary at less advanced levels. Sheets containing sequentially organized and significant questions on context and content -questions that call for one-word answers -serve as useful guides for the student. Such questions help him filter out and listen for significant information. The questions themselves suggest the content and provide the student with an organizational frame for selective listening.

For listening comprehension exercises, we tend to read passages, record news or broadcasts, or prepare lectures. All of them have value, but they are extremely difficult sources for early practice in selective listening. This type of listening exercises does not present the redundancies, the colloquialisms, the hesitations, the gestures and the facial expressions that are an inseparable part of the spoken language. They emphasize informational content and fail to provide the signals used to communicate information and meaning.

Since most of the actual listening the student will be exposed to outside of the class is likely to be real-life conversation, it seems wisest to use materials cast in real-life situations for listening comprehension exercises -at least at the beginning level. If the oral instruction of the course is contextualized -set into a " situation " - it should





be easy enough to contextualize the aural practice as well. The teacher can easily adapt to listening exercises those situations through which the text presents oral drills and communicative activities, just by giving them a slightly different twist. Listening exercises should be as natural as the situations from which they grow. In other words, an exercise in listening comprehension must be as close as possible to a "slice of life" -neither a contrived situation nor an artificially delivered discourse. By means of this, a teacher has a great work to do, and has to be a very creative person in order to teach listening communicatively.

CONCLUSION

Studying of learners listening activities, I conclude that from the beginning of teaching foreign language we should also teach foreign language learners to listen by using even easy foreign words or phrases, because it improves their listening and understanding activities of foreign language. We should use different listening exercises in our classes in order to improve FL learners' communicative abilities in foreign language. Then they can understand foreigners and communicate with foreigners without any hesitation.

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