

IMPROVING STUDENTS' LISTENING SKILL BY ACTIVELY INVOLVING THEM IN LISTENING CLASS

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ABSTRACT

The paper discussed aspects of spoken language that should be considered in the development of teaching materials, and proposes a few techniques for teaching listening comprehension. It started with an overview of important characteristics of spoken discourse, which include phonology, accents, prosodic features, speech rate, and discourse structure. It maintained that the materials should incorporate aspects of strategies for listening that helped learners overcome comprehension barriers and gained the most from the spoken input. Some principal considerations in grading listening materials were presented according to five parameters, which included linguistic characteristics, explicitness, organization, content and context. Finally, the paper suggested some teaching techniques that promoted strategic listening for English as a Foreign Language Learners.

Keywords: teaching materials, listening strategy, EFL, spoken discourse

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the four important skills in teaching any language is listening. Unfortunately, in our country teaching listening has been undervalued for some time. Listening received little attention in language teaching and learning, because teaching methods emphasized productive skills and listening was characterized as passive activity (Richards & Renandya, 2010). This happens because of several things include lacking of tools. But nowadays the world has been changing. These changes have been taking place very promptly. Every aspect of the four language skills has been balanced in syllabus of English

teaching, though it often occurs difficulty in classroom.

Listening can be considered the fundamental skill to speaking, because without understanding the listening, any learning cannot begin. Language is a system that the language is formed by several components regularly patterned. Arici (2008) in Acat, Demiral, & Kaya (2016) also stated that listening starts at the pre-school period with the efforts of the individual on understanding what is happening around, the information of the universe containing the knowledge, feeling, thought of this era and the

development of the basic mental structures.

Listening is a dynamic and collaborations prepared in which audience gets speech sounds and tries to connect meaning to the talked words. The audience tries to understand the expecting message of the verbal content to reply viably to oral communication.

Listening and hearing are considered diverse process. Whereas hearing is considered as physical, detached and characteristic process, listening is physical and mental, dynamic and learnt process and is characterized as a skill. Although audience members can get messages displayed at a rate of 380 words per minute, a normal individual talks at a rate of around 150 words per minute.

Grammar translation was the primary technique of language training more than a century ago, and it placed no emphasis on listening ability because the goal was to read and translate scientific publications from the target language (usually Latin) to the original language. Then, with the emergence of oral skills, there was a paradigm shift from written language to oral skills of the Direct Approach.

Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985) proposed that learners learn best when they are exposed to intelligible input that is somewhat above their current level of competence. According to Krashen (1985), second language acquisition is identical to first language acquisition, therefore listening is the first step toward language proficiency.

Listening was largely utilized as a prompter or as a prelude to the development of productive skills. Listening and speaking were

practiced together in content-based instruction, such as watching and discussing a film and conducting an interview. Tasks provide both oral and textual input and output processing for language acquisition, similar to task-based language education.

Nowadays listening plays a vital part in dialect classroom. The current improvements in both visual and sound innovation improve the varieties of listening materials and offer assistance to draw especially youthful learners' consideration and motivate them way better to reach the learning targets.

2. OVERVIEW OF RELATED THEORIES

Definition of Listening

Listening is the first communication skill that everyone will learn. It is the invisible spiritual process that plays the important role in everyday life. People listen to for various purposes. Listening is the most important for foreign language learning because it provides language input (Rost, 1994).

Based on communication theory, Rost (2002) considers listening as part of a transactional process in which all participants "send" and "receive" messages simultaneously. He says that definitions of listening are based on four orientations or perspectives. First, from a receptive perspective, listening is seen as taking in what the speaker is actually saying. Second, from a constructive point of view, listening can be defined as the construction and expression of meaning. Third, from a cooperative perspective, listening is about negotiating meaning with the speaker

and responding to that meaning. Fourth, from the view of transformative perspective, it means creating meaning through involvement, imagination and empathy.

The Methods of Listening

Listening is an internal process. Some experts describe what happens when we listen. According to Underwood (1989), there are three stages of the auditory process, i.e:

1. Sound enters the echo memory for a very short time to be organized into meaningful units according to the linguistic knowledge that the listener already possesses.
2. The information is then processed by short-term memory. Within seconds, words are checked and compared with information already in long-term memory and meanings are extracted.
3. The drawn meaning is stored in long-term memory for later use.

Wilson (2008) distinguishes listening comprehension process into two types; bottom-up and top-down processing. Bottom-up processing refers to the listener decoding the incoming message by analyzing it at the sound, word, and sentence level. Top-down processing refers to the listener using background knowledge such as prior knowledge of the subject, situational or context cues, patterns or scripts stored in long memory term. However, understanding is only possible when listeners are able to put what they hear into context.

The Objectives of Listening

Objective listening have long been exceedingly esteemed since the

consideration of listening sections in major standardized language tests. The skills that have been surveyed most broadly drop into two major categories:

Top-level attributes, consist of:

1. The capacity to recognize primary thoughts and themes
2. The capacity to recognize pertinent data to back an idea
3. The capacity to create deductions from data given
4. The capacity to draw on lexical information and down to business information to unravel problems

Bottom-level attributes, consist of:

1. The capacity to recognize quickly talked content in genuine time
2. The capacity to confine words and expressions when talked rapidly
3. The capacity to parse articulations into linguistic classes
4. The capacity to sort thick data into coherent classes

Both these “top down” and “bottom up” categories are basically “receptive skills”, that's recognizing and process what the speaker has said. Whereas responsive skills are vital for proficient listening, it is useful to select the foremost locks in hones conceivable to create these abilities.

In other words, Teaching English clearly suggests that the students should be able to:

1. Understand discourses by or conversations with native English speakers about daily life and social life;

2. Grasp the principle idea, argument, or plot of the listening materials;
3. Take brief notes while listening;
4. Understand listening passages, with the problemstage being similar to that of mini talks in TOEFL

To satisfy all of the necessities is not any smooth task. Moreover, maximum of our college students had been taught below a language getting to know state of affairs wherein listening is treated as a basically passive activity. Thus, our college students have maintained a passive and subordinate function within the classroom. Usually the instructor prepares the whole thing for them, leaving no area for the scholars to behave as contributors in class.

Bearing in thoughts that there have to be adjustments with inside the coaching of listening, we need to shift our consciousness from passive to lively listening starting the primary day our students step into our classroom. Since understanding the information broadcast is generally the maximum tough component for our college students, we want to layout the subsequent activities to assist them.

DISCUSSION

Sharing Listening Activities

Listening Comprehension

Buck (2001) stated that spoken discourse has characteristics that distinguish it from written concepts, necessitating various levels of attention and concentration on the learners' part. When it comes to spoken communication, shorter than ephemeral, which is provided at a

rate of 140 to 210 words per minute. Coordinators (and, but, or) connect concept units, and it carries prosodic information. Stress and intonation are examples of such characteristics.

Listening comprehension problems have been identified in some research. Speech speeds and the perception of individual sounds in a stream of utterances are two of the most challenging barriers to overcome. It has been limited to listening tasks, so that giving students the news is one of the ways to keep students practicing listening. By listening to the news, they are introduced not only to authentic materials, but also to other challenges such as hearing correct pronunciation, understanding unfamiliar words, and newsreader stress. The goal of giving this task to students is to train them with "difficult" listening material and, ultimately, they will improve their listening skills.

As a result, developing a teaching strategy that strives to assist makes sense. These challenges are overcome by students. Teachers can use the aspects of oral discourse to help them in the acquisition of listening comprehension. They can make use of the speaking rate as a criterion for selecting things that are appropriate for their students' existing abilities.

The pupils' difficulty in understanding The Jakarta Post broadcasts stems from their lack of acquaintance with the background of some of the news items. Furthermore, they are unfamiliar with some of the foreign names and locations.

Therefore before the listening class, the teaching strategy in teaching listening is to choose a few

recorded legitimate news pieces with well-known individuals and backgrounds. Allow students to listen to a recorded news story once or twice during listening class, then pick out the words, phrases, and names of locations or persons that need to be discussed.

The following short news item is an example:

Landslide in *Bukittinggi*

Two people died while four others were wounded in a landslide at a yard behind a house near *Teleng* market in *Bukittinggi*, West Sumatra on Tuesday. Killed were 3-year-old Yusuf, who was the son of a kiosk owner at the market, *Bujang*, and 22-year-old Meli, who was a visitor to the market. The injured were rushed to the Achmad Muchtar and Yarsi hospitals. *Bukittinggi* Deputy Mayor Ismet Amziz said Tuesday it was suspected that recent heavy rainfall had caused the landslide.

Source:

thejakartapost.com/news/2009/11/10/two-die-bukittinggi-landslide.html

For this news item, the teacher can divide the students into groups and ask them to briefly discuss the issue of *Bukittinggi*. How the problem arose and what the Deputy Major did. Such discussions generally inspire students because they want to share their knowledge. Students usually agree clearly after a discussion, which makes it easier to understand the next time they come across a message on that particular topic.

In another activity, teachers encourage students to do voluntary work. Students can choose a topic of interest and give a short lecture in class. They can choose themes like

the latest movies and world-famous people.

From what I have done so far, I have found that my students are very motivated. They have participated very seriously in these activities, and they have presented some topics, for instance, one student found some interesting information about George Clooney to direct and star in 'Good Morning, Midnight' for Netflix from CNN source, and he recorded it onto a disc that he brought to the classroom for the class to enjoy. These class activities help my students deepen their understanding of the news items and enlarge their knowledge about the world as well.

News Presentation

The strategy for these activities is firstly, each student to choose a partner and for a couple to give a news presentation in class on a particular day. The student in charge of the presentation previously recorded an important message of the week that they would like to share with other members of the class. Each pair will give a presentation in 15 to 20 minutes, and the pair can choose how to present their own report.

It seems the students are actively participating in the class activity. Each pair tried to make their presentation different and better. Some start with pre-listening questions; some start with a background intro; others introduce any difficult words in the newsletter; and others still give the class a summary of the news they've made.

During this activity, the speaker may occasionally pause to explain the point or answer a question. If the speaker is uncertain

about some parts, he / she can ask for help throughout the class. All students could be very active and competitive in class and each pair wants to be better than the previous pair. Finally, a short summary from the teacher gives a good conclusion to this activity.

Points of Doing Listening Activities

There are several advantages to assigning students to the new:

1. Students practice listening a lot to pronounce English correctly.
2. Students are familiar with the different accents of English.
3. The student is proficient in understanding unfamiliar words, phrases, and sentences.
4. Students can enrich their vocabulary, because news provides a variety of vocabulary.
5. The students are skillful in mapping their minds, especially related to what they have listened to, which is important in listening comprehension.
6. The students have also a lot of practice to listen to the 'normal' speed of the speaker (news reader) even though it is hard for first few weeks. By doing these activities every week, it is expected that it will improve the students' listening ability.

Language Requirement

Every high school student is required to learn a foreign language, and often English is chosen because it is the language most people around the world use to communicate. There are difficulties to listen and understand of genuine BBC and VOA news broadcast, so that it is imperative that the students understand them and it is assigned to

do some activities to help the students to fulfill the requirement.

Job Prospects

A good mastery of English often leads to the possibility of a good job after graduation. Experience shows that a good mastery of English leads to career growth. Candidates for high paying jobs must be able to use English fluently. It can be said with certainty that job opportunities make a significant contribution to motivating students to learn foreign languages, especially English.

Social Esteem

Mastering a foreign language is a challenge, but not many people are fluent in it, so it's worth a high reputation. Anyone who is fluent in a foreign language is more prestigious, generally respected, has more opportunities and therefore contributes significantly to their social success. Respecting society can lead to personal satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

Listening is no longer considered a passive skill but an active one because listening requires the active participation of the learner. When it comes to hands-on instruction in class, make sure all students are actively involved, as that's the best way for them to learn.

Asking students to listen to the news is for the purpose of improving their listening skills. This assignment includes scripting the story and answering the Five WH HOW questions found in the newsletter. Students are challenged to listen to listening material that is uniquely different from the listening material they have in the classroom.

By doing this exercise, students will learn a rich vocabulary, the pronunciation of unfamiliar words, and the stress of news readers. When this activity is done continuously, it improves their listening comprehension.

These activities may have helped students in their academic research, which will ultimately contribute to a satisfying career. As teacher, we realized that motivation is one of the major factors in the success of learning a foreign language, and that they are actively involved in the classroom, they can see successful results in the future. Imagination and creativity allow second language teachers to take full advantage of this new strategy to improve their listening and speaking skills.

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