

TEACHING LISTENING AS ONE OF THE BENEFICIAL APPROACHES IN LEARNING LANGUAGES

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Abstract. *When learning a second language listening is considered to be a significant language skill to develop both in class and in self-study process. Learners consider listening as the most difficult language skill to learn and essential. Since the role of listening comprehension in language teaching has been repeatedly emphasized, many teachers do not pay enough attention to its importance in their classes. To give the stress on the teaching techniques and methods to develop listening skills a definition of listening and listening comprehension, a brief discussion of reasons for listening, followed by reviewing listening comprehension process, the importance of listening, teachers' roles in listening comprehension, and discuss strategies, techniques, and goals of listening are described in this article.*

Keywords: *language skills, listening comprehension, reason, process, benefits, role, strategies, techniques, goals*

Introduction

Listening skill is very important in foreign language learning because the key to learn a language is to receive language input. Language acquisition happens when learners have sufficient comprehensible input. It is stated that listening is significant in language learning because it provides input for learners and it plays an important role in the development of learners' language. A major difference between more successful and less successful learners is related to their ability to use listening as an instrument of learning while negotiating with native speakers, using internet and multimedia. Listening comprehension process provides beneficial intuitions in teaching listening. Learner may find listening comprehension skill difficult to learn and this can also provide teachers with opportunities to change their listening exercises into more effective ones. Developing listening comprehension skill helps learners to succeed in language learning to enhance comprehensible input. Since learners' self-reliance in listening comprehension will be increased, they will be motivated to have access to spoken English such as conversations with native speakers. [1]

Therefore, it is obvious that listening is very important for the lives of students since it is used as a means of learning at all phases of instruction. Despite its significance in foreign language learning, the instruction of listening comprehension has been overlooked in many EFL classes. According to some experts, listening develops faster than the three other language skills and it can make easy the development of the other language skills.

Vital issues concerning listening comprehension are reviewed in great number of sources where researchers define the terms "listening" and "listening comprehension", "the reasons for listening", "listening comprehension process". They state the significance of listening, elaborated teachers' roles in listening comprehension, and discuss strategies, techniques, and goals of listening.[2]

Methods and materials

It should be noted that different techniques should be used in the classrooms like authentic materials and technology. The use of technology can promote the expansion of listening comprehension by providing students with interesting materials. Authentic materials involve songs, TV serials, movies, and documentaries and technology includes videos, computers, and the Internet. Authentic materials and technology are closely interrelated to each other since technology is required to operate authentic materials.

Experts indicate that the use of technology while using authentic materials can solve difficulties encountered with authentic materials. Many studies have been done concerning the impacts of technology and authentic materials into the classes on listening comprehension. They examined the impacts of captioned authentic videos on listening comprehension. The results obtained from this study represented those learners watching the videos with captions scored significantly higher than the ones watching the videos without captioning. A study has been carried out towards the effect of videos with subtitles on listening comprehension. The researchers identified three groups: L1 subtitled group, L2 subtitled group, and without subtitle group. The results revealed that the group with English subtitles outperformed the other groups.[3]

Different language skills should be used by learners to increase the development of each skill. It is illogical to detach skills when doing an activity in a specific lesson. The use of different skills can make the activities more meaningful, motivate learners, and create interesting contexts. Listening can be used to improve other skills such as reading or speaking skills in all classes and listening can gain from specific skills such as pronunciation. It is emphasized that developing listening skills with pronunciation is an effective strategy that should be used in English classes. In this way, it is recommended that teachers instruct and improve listening by mixing it with pronunciation.

As for the example with ESP course in medical University, students are given a task to listen to the terms that are new key words and word combinations in the current topic of the lesson. Teacher suggests to listen to the words twice and repeat after the speaker. This work involves students into the process and prepares for the next stage connected to the listening. At this stage students have to do tasks based on the new vocabulary and matching them with their definition. Then teacher checks the work by inviting students to listen right version of the matching task. This the second time students listen to the new vocabulary. Moving to the next stage of the lesson teacher suggests students to listen to the text by giving instructions before. The instructions include making notes on the text as main ideas of the information. With medical context it is Cause-Symptoms -Examinations – Treatment of a disease. Students listen twice. First without stops and then with stops. After oral feedback students move to watching a video on the topic and here we see real progress in listening comprehension based on video material that mostly is presented as authentic one. The video may include either monologue or dialogue on the topic. The practice demonstrates good results in groups with B1, B2 level.

The tasks may vary as follows: Listen and repeat, Listen and make notes, Listen and answer the questions, Listen and do true/ false activity, Listen and describe, Listen and fill in the gaps, Listen and match, etc.

Discussion

Listening has been defined as the ability to recognize and understand what others are expressing by their oral speech including meaningful structures and purposes. This process

includes understanding a speaker's pronunciation, the speaker's grammar and vocabulary, and understanding of meaning.

While listening, students hear oral speech, divide sounds, classify them into lexical and syntactic units, and interpret the message. As cited in sources, learners negotiate meaning with the speaker, answering and creating meaning by participation, creativity and empathy. The process of interpretation in which listeners match what they hear with what they already know is a complex process and requires proper training.

As it is considered, listening is an active and important mental ability. It aids us to understand the world around us and is one of the necessary elements in creating successful interaction in the society. There are a lot of reasons for listening. There are five main reasons for listening like to engage in social protocols, to exchange information, to enjoy yourself, to share emotions, to get information and share it in the community. [4] It has been expressed that those teachers should prepare their students for the following situations:

a. Attending a lesson. The purpose of this activity is to comprehend the major ideas and to recognize the main information.

b. Listening to announcements, news, and weather forecast. The main goal of listeners is to obtain relevant information.

c. Listening to plays, watching TV, or listening to a radio for entertainment. The objective of this activity is to amuse oneself.

d. Listening to someone delivering a speech. In this situation, the listener is interested in opinions and attitudes of the speaker.

e. Following the instructions. The goal of the listener is to perform the function successfully.

According to the interactive processing, listening process should be combined to each other to increase listening comprehension. The benefit of background knowledge information, contextual information and linguistic information makes understanding and interpretation easy. When the content of the material is familiar to the listener, he uses his background knowledge to make predictions which is proved by the new input. If the content of the listening text is unfamiliar to the listener, he can only use his linguistic knowledge, particularly the lexical and syntactical knowledge to understand information.

Listening comprehension needs more concentration and a quick understanding. When listening, a lot of factors should be specifically paid attention to. They are context, facial expressions, and body gestures that are very important for the listeners to facilitate the understanding of what is conveyed by speaker.[5]

While teaching listening, experts suggest tips to know for reaching certain goals. They are as follows:

1. The stages of the lesson should be carefully and gradually planned. Listening activities progress from simple to more complex while learners get in language proficiency.

2. Active student's participation is crucial moment in teaching languages. Student participation is his/her written/oral answer to the listening comprehension material and immediate feedback on performance that can keep students concerned and motivated.

3. Communicative necessity for remembering to develop concentration. These two factors are very important in recalling and can be done by giving the students a writing task before listening to the material.

4. Focus on conscious memory task. One of the aims of listening is to reinforce learners' recall to increase their memory capacity. 'Listening is receiving, receiving needs thinking, and thinking needs memory. It is impossible to separate listening, thinking, and remembering.

5. Teach not test. The aim of checking learners' responses is just feedback that is a way of helping learners to know how they did and how they are advancing. [6],[11]

Learners should have a lot of practice and exposure to English in order to develop this ability. There is a relationship between listening to a language and learning it. If we compare two learners; one is living in a country where the target language is the first language and the other is living in a country where English is only spoken in academic places. The difference is that the first learner can acquire English more easily, effectively, and rapidly than the second one. Consequently, learners need as much exposure to English language as possible.[12]

It is well known that listening has an important role in everyday life and when people are engaged in communication nine percent is spent to writing, 16 percent to reading, 30 percent to speaking, and 45 percent to listening which shows the significance of listening in the communication process. It has been noted that listening is the first skill to appear in growing child. Children are able to listen before they can speak. Therefore, the significance of listening cannot be ignored but emphasized.

Modern teachers have a variety of techniques in their classes to influence the students' activity and motivation to learn listening skills effectively. It requires starbonship , organization of the process .

- To be a good organizer a teacher should explain what their students have to do, give clear instructions, and give useful feedback to their work. Teachers also prepare the listening materials proper for the audience, i.e., their language level.

- To be a good controller means to perform managing process during the whole lesson. It is a teacher's duty to arrange what students do at each stage of the listening lesson.

- To be a good evaluator a teacher monitors his students and gives them feedback on their performance. They should evaluate the level of their students in order to motivate students for listening and get beneficial results. Students should follow their progress.

- A good teacher is a teacher who gives their students the necessary advice and assists them to solve their difficulties such as unfamiliar vocabulary or grammatical structures.

- Supportive function of the teachers acts as being a coach and a resource supporting their learners to stimulate ideas. Teachers assist their learners in every stage and should help them towards possible missing information.

- Partner's role of the teachers also influences the activity in the classroom. It can improve the classroom atmosphere and promote engaging in the listening task in spite of its difficulty. [7],[9]

Conclusion

We reviewed some important issues towards listening comprehension in English language teaching. Teaching and learning listening are really beneficial in language because it provides input for the learners and without comprehending input, they cannot learn anything. Listening comprehension is a complex skill that should be developed consciously. It should be developed with practice, with step-by-step process, when learners consider the process of listening without the pressure of evaluation. The use of listening activities to test students' comprehension results in worry and nervousness which stops the development of listening comprehension strategies.

[8] The positive and effective use of strategies affects learners' self-concept, beliefs, and attitudes towards listening comprehension. The significant roles of teachers, listening strategies, and techniques on improving the learners' listening comprehension is the main idea of the article . Through this paper, the researchers believed that if learners want to improve their listening skill, they should practice it a lot in the target language. The review of literature indicated that learners should be provided with appropriate materials and activities in which they can learn how to understand the English language. Teachers should give learners the opportunity to listen to native speakers' speech, should choose listening texts that are uttered by non-native speakers so that they can develop their listening skills and do not get disappointed. When learners have developed their listening skills to a specified level, teachers can choose texts spoken by native speakers as teaching materials and activities. Suitable teaching in listening comprehension can decrease listening apprehension and provide a good basis for becoming independent learners who can effectively use the listening process for learning. Finally, it can be concluded that guiding learners in the process of listening provides them with the knowledge by which they can successfully complete a listening activity and puts them in control of their learning of intercultural society.[13]

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