



IMPROVING LISTENING SKILLS

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Abstract

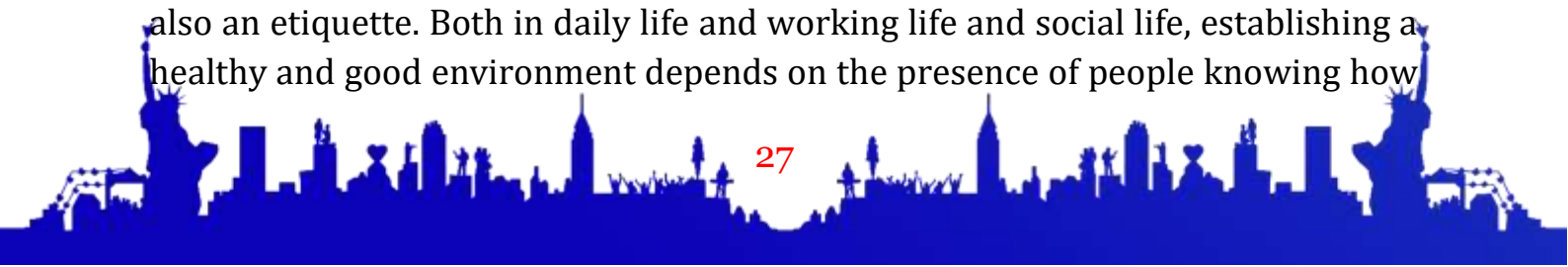
When the communication process is looked from language perspective, it is seen that a sender may send a message by either speaking or writing; a receiver may receive a message by either listening or reading. In this case, the sender must have a command of verbal or written expression skills; the receiver must have a command of skills of understanding what is listened or spoken. For this reason, all individuals in a society must have a command of verbal and written expression skills and those of understanding what is listened and spoken. Otherwise, it is not possible to mention a healthy communication. We achieve the exchange of information which we call communication by means of four basic skills of our mother tongue, which are classified as listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Key words: fully, mental activities, listening, competent, verbal explanation
introduction

Listening is the ability to fully understand a message which a speaking or a loudly reading person desire to give. This is an important part of communication and education process. Listening is not only done in order to set up communication, but at the same time it develops learning, understanding and mental skills. According to this, listening is not just the process of hearing sounds correctly. Listening is the whole of mental activities realized in order to understand what is heard. That is to say, listening means making choices from among what is heard, organizing them, integrating what is transferred by the speaker with background knowledge and structuring them mentally. Listening in educational communication includes carefully following and perceiving messages sent by the speaker to the listener and making sense of them by retrieving relevant experiences from the memory. Since most of the teaching is based on verbal explanation, being competent at listening on its own is a communication skill for both the teacher and the student.

In order to both set up healthy communication and achieve efficient learning, it is necessary to know how to listen.

Listening is not only understanding, getting informed and appreciating, but it is also an etiquette. Both in daily life and working life and social life, establishing a healthy and good environment depends on the presence of people knowing how





to listen. Listening training starting at early ages is a process composing all learning periods of an individual. Listening habit which a student acquire during preschool and elementary school years should be enhanced more via help of new information to be given and new practices to be done at high school level and a good listening habit should be one of his/her distinct personality characteristics.

For listening works at school to be useful, there are some prerequisites to be fulfilled. These are readiness level, attention and teacher guidance. Before starting a lesson, especially students should be made ready to listen. Each teacher can do this with a particular style (a question or an anecdote related to subject, etc.). Drawing students' attention to the lesson, subject is the prerequisite for a good listening. It is difficult for a student with distracted attention to understand what he or she listens. Students' seeing a person or material they listen, the presence of silence in the environment and, most important of all, teachers' being guides by being good listeners are indispensable prerequisites of listening training. In the development of listening skills, students should get benefited from audio-visual aids such as computer, television, radio, stereo, cd player, etc. Especially in reading-listening works, a listening training in a different method may be realized by having students listen to poems, stories, tales, fables, etc. Or texts from audio aids or watch them visually.

Moreover, one of the methods most frequently used in listening training is drama. Drama on its own is an educational area developing and training a child and at the same time an effective method developing creativity.

Dictations are among the activities to be done with the aim of developing students' listening skills. Students are supposed to listen in dictation works. Reading a text to be dictated by dividing into appropriate lengths and repeating parts read will help students to focus their attention. During listening, students should picture what they listen in their minds by using their imagination as well. Many stories include rich detail and descriptive expressions. Children should create mental images by thinking over these and, after listening, be able to put them into paper as well. In developing students' listening skills, story maps should be benefited. A story map includes diagrams in which characters and concepts of event, time and place in a story are associated with one another. A story map prepared beforehand is distributed to students after having them listen to the story and they are asked to fill in this diagram. Hence, both students





can be helped to develop their listening skills and permanent learning can be achieved.

Children's literature is a kind of transition period literature whose basic source is child and childhood, appropriate for the child's perception, interest, attention, emotion, thought and imaginary world, reflecting child's view and child's reality, achieving contents appropriate for children simply and sincerely in prosody, language, thought and types, not only having children acquire the habit of reading but also contributing to children's development in terms of literature, art and esthetics, and preparing children for adulthood in a sensitive way. Although childhood is regarded as a short period in person's life, it is a period whose effects cannot be disregarded. Experts studying on language development suggest that childhood period in a person's life is a very important period of time for language development. In an individual's language development, such factors as individuals with whom he or she is in communication (family-friends), social environment and experience richness are very important. Differences and richness of these factors affect language development greatly and positively. In this respect, children's literature is very effective on children's language development. Children should be introduced nicely prepared children's literature works at preschool stage and elementary first stage.

Children's literature works enrich and develop children's imaginary world. By means of these works, the child discovers other worlds and learn about details of his or her language. For this reason, at every stage of the development of listening skill, children should be made to meet children's literature products.

The fact that the listening skill is a skill which can be developed and measured should be accepted by all teachers and activities should be carried out in this direction. All teachers, mainly classroom teachers, should spend effort to have students acquire and develop listening skills. To achieve this, teachers should be able to carry out regular and planned activities aiming to develop students' listening skills.

At elementary first grade, the training of listening, one of four basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), should be given priority and students should be made to acquire basic habits related to listening comprehension starting from this grade. Moreover, at the other grade levels, too, listening training should be continued by attaching the same importance and children's literature products (memoirs, stories, fairy tales, nursery rhymes, riddles, poems, legends, myths, etc.) And various methods and techniques





appropriate for listening training(play, impersonation, dictation, drama, competition, etc.) Should be used to have students to acquire this skill.

Starting from individual differences among children, teachers may fill in observation forms including basic criteria related to listening skills for each student within educational year and, starting from these observation forms, determine students remaining below class level and plan separate works for these students.

To overcome these problems we as teachers can help our students if we teach them how to improve their listening through some skills. The listener employs a number of specialized skills when listening and his success in understanding the content of what he hears depends to a large extent of his expertise in these specialized skills.

Conclusion

Encourage your students to focus on phrases, patterns of speech, and ideas.

Once your students know why they are listening to someone, they need to understand what they are hearing. But that doesn't mean they need to process every word the speaker sends their way. Trying to understand and remember every word in sequence is more than the short term memory can handle. When students understand and remember chunks of language or ideas, their comprehension increases. Encourage your students to focus on phrases, patterns of speech, and ideas. They should avoid mentally translating every word they hear into their native language but should try to understand the ideas instead of the words. This listening strategy affects the esl teacher, too. So when you assess your students, don't ask about specific words or quotations. Instead ask about units of meaning, ideas and how they relate to each other.

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