

## MODERN APPROACHES IN DEVELOPING LISTENING SKILLS OF YOUNG LEARNERS

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**Abstract.** *The article deals with problems related to improving and designing listening tasks in English classes and suggests effective techniques which can promote with the upcoming complications. Listening comprehension refers to phonetic, lexical, grammatical, and semantic comprehension of spoken speech. This means that learners need to have phonetic, lexical, and grammatical skills to properly understand the content of the speech. Learning to understand and comprehend speech is a process that improves the learner’s ability to hear, develops memory and attention, and helps to differentiate sounds, to learn the meaning of lexical units, and the grammatical links between words. During this process, the reader’s brain’s analysis and synthesis activity begins, and the logic of the analyzers is interpreted. As a result, the learner’s listening and comprehension activities begin to improve, and the ability to listen to and understand ideas on specific topics begins to develop. These skills are transformed into skills through specialized exercises.*

**Keywords:** *listening, comprehension, problem, listening strategies, cognitive, metacognitive.*

Listening is much more than hearing. It involves both physical and mental processes, hearing and interpreting. The mental processes are both complex and unobservable. This has two consequences. Firstly, we do not know for sure exactly what happens and secondly, it is not always easy to know where things have gone wrong when listening is not successful (Turner, 1995:2). Listening is a process that enables the brain to construct meaning from the sounds heard. It is, however, an internal process, which cannot be observed directly. This is to say that it is difficult to assess whether the listener has effectively used the skills at a particular occasion, what listening strategies are employed, which source of information is dominantly used, and what problems the listener experiences (Anderson and Lynch, 1988:3). For Underwood (1989:1), listening is the activity of paying attention and trying to get meaning for something we hear. It is a complex process that allows us to understand spoken language. Through listening, we process language in real time employing pacing, units of encoding and pausing that are unique to spoken language (Rost 2001:7).

Listening is an important skill in which students need to gain adequate proficiency. It is a critical means of language learning and so is it the basis for other language skills (Rost, 1990). It is very much important particularly in the educational setting where a foreign language is used as medium of instruction. As in the case of Ethiopia listening ability plays a prominent role on students’ achievement in other field of studies. Therefore, effective listening becomes one of the determining factors for students’ success or failure (Tarone and Yule, 1989.)

It is believed that students should develop academic listening skills while they are at schools. They should be provided with varied listening comprehension practices and trained to employ effective listening strategies (Ur, 1984; Richards, 1985; Harmer, 2001). Some local researchers also share similar ideas. Berhanu (1993) who studied listener strategies in collaborative

discourse and motivation in listening classes respectively are some of the studies worth mentioning.

### **Types of Listening**

From these stages we can identify types of listening as below:

1) Intensive. Listening for perception of the components (phonemes, words, intonation, discourse markers, etc) of larger stretch of language.

2) Responsive. Listening to relatively short stretch of language (a greeting question, command, comprehension check)

3) Selective. Processing stretches of discourse such as short monologue for several minutes in order to „scan“ for certain information. Selective listening could ask students like listen for numbers, a grammatical category, directions, or certain facts and events.

4) Extensive. Listening to develop a top down, global understanding of spoken language. Listening for gist, main idea, and making inference are all part of extensive listening.

Several models have been developed to explain how the listening process functions in adults. According to John Flowerdew and Lindsay Miller those models divide into three categories, they are the bottom-up model, the top down model, and interactive model (Flowerdew J. and Miller L, 2005).

The pioneering classification of language learning strategies was introduced to the research field of language learning strategy by Rubin (1981), as she has identified strategies as operations that contribute directly to language learning and others that are indirectly involved with language learning. Though direct/indirect dichotomy proposed by Rubin (1981) led Oxford to classify language learning strategies regarding the direct contribution they provide for language learning and to enumerate them as direct and indirect strategies, there could be seen an obtrusive degree of difference in the placement of language learning strategies into some categories.

Rubin categorizes the language learning strategies into three and enumerates them as ‘learning strategies’, ‘communication strategies’, and ‘social strategies’. Learning strategies, being the first category of Rubin’s language learning strategy classification, are made up of two main types as ‘cognitive learning strategies’ and ‘metacognitive learning strategies’

Cognitive learning strategies are the operations used by learner while dealing with a problem or learning, which implies direct analysis, transformation, or synthesis of learning materials. As listed by Rubin, clarification / verification, guessing / inductive inferencing, deductive reasoning, practice, memorization, and monitoring are the 6 main cognitive strategies contributing directly to language learning.

Metacognitive learning strategies refer to the steps to oversee, regulate or self-direct language learning. Planning, prioritizing, setting goals, and self-management are among the various processes involved in metacognitive learning strategies.

Buck in Richards (2008) identifies two kinds of strategies in listening. The first is Cognitive strategy. It relates to comprehending and storing input in working memory or long-term memory for later retrieval. Comprehension processes are associated with the process of linguistics and non-linguistics input. Storing and memory processes are associated with the storing of linguistics. Using and retrieval processes are associated with assessing memory, to be ready for output. The next is Metacognitive Strategy. It refers to conscious or unconscious mental activities that perform an executive function in the management of cognitive strategy. This strategy involves assessing the situation, which is taking the surrounding of the language task by assessing one’s own

knowledge. Next is monitoring the effectiveness of one's own and another performance. The last is self-evaluating performance after engaging in the activity and Self testing the performance to determine the effectiveness of one's own language use.

Rost (2011: 2-4) purposes four listening orientation; receptive, constructive, collaborative, and transformative.

1. The first Orientation is receptive. It deals with receiving and catching what the speaker actually says. it focuses on getting idea, decoding the message, unpacking the content from the speaker. It involves the process of attending to, hearing, understanding and remembering aural symbols. Listening is receiving the transfer of images, impressions, thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and emotions from the speaker.

2. The second is listening for constructing and representing meaning. Listening means reframing the speaker's message in a way that's relevant to the hearer, understanding why the speaker is talking and noticing what is not said. Listening is the process by which oral language is received, critically and purposefully attended to, recognized and interpreted in terms of past experiences and future expectancies.

3. The third orientation is collaborative. Listening is negotiating meaning with the speaker and responding. it is the process of negotiating shared information or values with the speaker. Listening is signaling to the speaker which ideas are clear and acceptable. It involves haring the emotional climate. In conclusion, Listening is the acquisition, processing, and retention of information in the interpersonal context.

4. The last listening orientation is transformative. Listening is creating meaning through involvement, imagination and empathy. It is creating a connection between the speaker and the listener. Listening is the process of creating meaning in the speaker. Listening is the process of altering the cognitive environment of both the speaker and the listener.

These difficulties are of two types:

1) coming from the listeners; 2) caused by the listening material.

The previous problem students have involved:

- a) making prediction what the speaker talks about;
- b) guessing unknown words or phrases;
- c) recognizing points.

The next problem involves:

- a) unfamiliar topics;
- b) trouble with sounds;
- c) authentic material;
- d) colloquial words;
- e) can not understand fast, natural native speech;
- f) need to hear things more than once.

Ur suggests following helpful ideas for solving problems:

1. Grade listening materials according to the students' level, and provide authentic materials rather than idealized, filtered samples. It is true that natural speech is hard to grade and it is difficult for students to identify the different voices and cope with frequent overlaps.

2. Design task-oriented exercises to engage the students' interest and help them learn listening skills subconsciously. Listening exercises are most effective if they are constructed round

tasks expressing agreement or disagreement, taking notes, marking a picture or diagram according to instructions, and answering questions.

3. Provide students with different kinds of input, such as lectures, radio news, films, announcements, everyday conversation, English songs, and so on. Select short, simple listening texts with little redundancy for lower-level students and complicated authentic materials with more redundancy for advanced learners. Provide background knowledge and linguistic knowledge, such as complex sentence structures and colloquial words and expressions, as needed. (Ur, 1984)

To sum up, based on the study has also uncovered the challenge and difficulties in learning and teaching in Junior High School. Most teachers feel that time management become their major challenge in organizing classroom. They have set lesson plan, but sometimes the lesson does not work exactly the same. They have to work with mixed level students, with students with learning difficulties, and with learners who are from challenging backgrounds. Teachers should be aware that it as part of teachers' primary duty to cope with every student. Most students can learn a foreign language to some level, but there are many reasons why their improvements are not achieved significantly. listening is one of the most important skills as people learn a language first by listening to it. Although many listening skills in your native language can be transferred to listening in a foreign language, many learners find it difficult to acquire this skill.

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