

The Fundamental Pedagogies of Teaching Listening: A Study

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Abstract

Teaching English has become a professional and academic field during the recent days. Many researches for teacher training have been conducted in order to raise the English teachers' knowledge and capabilities in carrying out effective lessons in classrooms of English learning. During the speedily globalized world, teaching English as a common communication tool has become even more significant than a few decades ago. Teaching listening skills needs a special attention. The success rate of a teacher largely depends on effective inculcation of listening skill in the students. The capacity of listening is varied from student to student based on their background. It is noticed that majority of students do not pay keen attention to listening. Moreover, they are least bothered about it until they need to be tested. English listening proficiency can be built through training. The teacher and learner should identify that the context involves a sender, a piece of information, and a receiver. A high-level listener should be able to arrange the received messages immediately. It is important for the listening ability trainer to remind their learners that it is not necessary for them to go back to the received messages in their first language. The intricacy of listening is sometimes formed in contexts, where the receivers do not know that strategies to follow and keep control of the language from the sender. This paper mainly deals with all possible ways of improving listening skills in adult students.

Keywords: listening, teaching, pedagogy, skills etc

Methodology:

Extensive study has been conducted on enhancing listen skills for the students of Sri Sai Brilliant School, Papanaidu Pet, Chittoor district of Andhrapradesh State. There are around 1000 students in the school from first class to tenth class. I have chosen 550 students from sixth class to tenth class. A diagnostic test was conducted to them with Google form to know the students' listening level. Later on, an intensive coaching was given through on-line for about three months. A lot of sources have been provided to them for improving their level of listening. Some of them are <https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/business-english/english-for-emails>, a world popular website for improving CEFR level, YouTube stories of Mr. Deepa Kiran, special talks of Pro. Sumita Ray, Prof. of English, Osmania University, Hyderabad, on listening skills and so on.

Once the training and guiding period was over, an assessment test has been conducted to assess the level of listening. To everyone's surprise, significant level of improvement in the language of students has been noticed. The attitude of speaking English has been formed. In fact, English speaking ambience has been taken place. It is understood that the practice of listening with proper orientation and adequate resources yield stupendous results and hence students are able to speak English confidently and fluently. The following is the elaborate discussion about what has been done and what techniques have been used to improve the level of English language of the targeted students.

Listening is the language proficiency that is used most often. However, sometimes it is ignored since the test of entrance examination in Asia does not set a high percentage in testing this ability. It is noticeable that many language learners do not pay enough attention and effort of establishing this proficiency till they need to be tested. It is never too behind schedule to assist our adult students in developing their listening ability that has been ignored for a long time.

There are various types of content that can be paid attention when we are establishing the listening ability. Instructors should be familiar with atmospheres in different contexts and teach the language learners. Not all contexts of listening tests is the same. For example, in a test of TOEFL, we can find the Education Test Service (ETS, 2009) provide diverse scenarios that might happen for foreign students in the test. There are situations and scenarios of dialogues or monologue in the airport, academic lectures in the classroom or dish ordering the restaurant. English listening for language learners requires intention and motivation of listening. Students can apply strategies for recognizing sounds and realizing what are mentioned in the context of testing.

English listening proficiency can be built through training. The teacher and learner should identify that the context involves a sender (an individual, broadcast, television...etc), a piece of information, and a receiver (a listener). A high-level listener should be able to arrange the received messages immediately, although they do not have time to translate the messages into their own mother tongues. It is important for the listening ability trainer to remind their learners that it is not necessary for them to go back to the received messages in their first language. Moreover, listeners need to understand the sender's option of terminology, organization of speaking, and speed of articulation. The intricacy of listening is sometimes formed in contexts, where the receivers do not know that strategies to follow and keep control of the language from the sender.

Therefore, it is indispensable for English teachers to assist their students to become successful listeners. The reason is that one of the most important goals of learning English is to establish a communicative approach to the outside world. In addition, good English teachers should help students who even do not have the ability of controlling the grammatical and extensive lexical items. Students need to use listening strategies to take full advantage of their knowledge and receive aural-input in the context. A listening practice should lead learners to identify relevant and non-relevant information, key words, and to listen to multifaceted and detailed contents.

1. Listening Procedure

In order to achieve a high proficiency of listening, English teachers should focus on the steps of listening. English teachers can raise students' awareness of listening procedures strategies by checking the following tips when they teach in the classroom. For instance, teachers need to think do they give their students sufficient listening opportunities to put into practice and use authentic listening tasks? Secondly, do they arrange well their context to match the broadcasting teaching in a right speed appropriately and see your their students have a good control learning pace in listening toward the input played by the listening equipments. Teachers need make sure their students can have a full control in the context and ensure that students are able to respond to the key points as well as the key words in the listening questions. In addition, English teachers should ask their students to practice listening strategies in class and ask them to follow outside class when doing their listening exercises. Teachers should give confidence to their students and remind them to be cognizant and aware of what they need to follow while they practice the listening drills.

In the listening classroom, teachers might find a minute to double-check and encourage their students to estimate their level of understanding through an assignment that teachers prepare and arrange for their students in the classroom. Language learners can assess their own ability when teachers encourage them to practice the drills. Moreover, flexibility of in-class and out-of-class listening assignments through students' own choices can be adopted. Listening to an English radio program or watching an English movie without caption can be a good way of practicing listening strategies.

1.1 Pedagogies of Teaching Listening

Different ways of encouraging the development of listening skills and the use of listening strategies can be adopted in the classroom activities. A professional English teacher should be able to make appropriate announcements, assign homework, and describe the content and format while at the same time they need to make their students' listening ability improved. Moreover, teachers should not assume that students will shift a strategy from one task to another automatically. They need to clearly mention to their students how a strategy can be applied in a certain type of scenario.

They to spend time listening to the context that is going to play in the class and explore the appropriate strategy for each listening question. Through raising students' consciousness of listening as a technique, they will be able to respond to the questions in the tests. Listening needs active thinking in mind and engagement with the contexts. Through overtly teaching listening strategies, instructors assist their students to buildup the above techniques.

After the students make progress, their confidence in communication may develop. Gradually, the students will be able to go out of the classroom and immerse in a native-speaking environment more naturally and maturely. That is to say, they will be more capable of interacting with foreigners and understanding the content given by them.

1. 2 Meta-cognitive Techniques for Listening

In this section, some suggestions as well as the listening strategies will be provided. They are flexible techniques that English teachers can develop based on the learners' level and characteristics. Some steps before and after listening should be done in order to make progress in listening proficiency.

First, before doing listening practice, some plans for improvements should be carried out. For example, teachers should help learners set a purpose or decide in advance what to listen. Among different types of purposes of learning, teachers and learners should clarify whether the listening activity is for test preparation, for doing business or for living, working or studying in an active-speaking environment. When a goal of listening is discovered, the appropriate textbooks as well as the listening materials can be practiced.

Before listening to the content, teachers should assist their learners in comprehending each word that might be difficult for them. Sometimes, linguistic limitation is the key point why the listeners cannot understand the meaning of the dialogue/monologue. Therefore, teachers need to determine if more training for linguistic or background knowledge is required.

Before the listening activity is executed, teachers can apply top-down strategy as well as informing students something about the background knowledge as well as the overall meaning of the context. Moreover, bottom-up strategy as well as focusing on the word/phrase chunk can be carried out. The reason is that after this strategy is conducted, the language learners will not miss a key word due to linguistic limitation.

Some techniques of listening need to be paid attention by the teachers and learners while and after listening. During the context is played by the audio-equipments, the learners should try to guess or make predictions for the possible questions and answers. Through asking why, when, who, how, which, several answers can be accurately found. In addition, learners need to know how to judge what is and is not significant information in the context. They should know how to find keywords; usually they are titles of persons (find who), a schedule of a certain event (find when), a number of a flight (find which one), a type of weather (what kind)..., etc. An important key why a non-native speaker can achieve high scores of listening is that s/he can think in the target language. When listening to a context in the CD/tape, the learner should try to think and respond to it totally in English, instead of a process of translating it into mother tongue.

The reason is that the content given by the speaker is usually speedy and not easy to catch up. Therefore, in order not to miss any information given from the speaker, the listener should not think in the first language.

The following part describes how a context can be fully understood. Indeed, if teachers have enough patience and time, they should repeat the context of listening and play for the learners for several times in the classroom. In each time, different types of listening strategy can be practiced. Subsequent to listening to the context, the procedure of evaluating comprehension

should be administered. First of all, learners should learn to analyze their strength and weakness of comprehension in a particular task or area. Secondly, particular types of listening tasks should be discovered in order to practice. Teachers need to assist and make a diagnosis for their students in order to find out several strategies that can resolve the main problems that might happen while listening.

According to a number of scholars (Brown, 2007; Dunkel, 1991; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Richards, 1983; Ur, 1984), the following eight characteristics of spoken language are adopted by native speakers. In some cases, they may not be easy for non-native speakers to understand, since these characteristics are all habits of oral-articulations of native speakers.

1. Crowding together is the first important characteristic that a learner should be familiar with. In spoken production, due to memory limitations, a sentence with many chunks can be articulated in a fast clustering way. That is to say, many sounds of words can be connected to each other and sound vague.
2. Redundancies in spoken language sometimes are frequent. The listeners can be trained to notice the rephrasing, repetitions, elaborations, and repeated main points. An accurate answer can be found through reconfirming the repeated information. Usually in an English test, a learner is only asked one question after listening to a long context given by the speaker.
3. Reduced forms usually are one of the most important strategies that an instructor should remind his/her learners to pay attention to. The format of reductions can be phonological ("Djeeset?" For "Did you see it?"), morphological (contractions like "He's/ I'll), syntactic (Where will the test be held?" "Room 307, Maybe.") or pragmatic (Would you like to eat the cake? No, I'm not hungry). Above reductions pose diverse difficulties, especially for learners who are just beginners to expose themselves in a native-speaking environment.
3. Performance variables such as hesitations, pauses, incomplete starts, and corrected information might appear in the context given by the speaker. The speaker can be a very young child or a senior grandmother. His/Her casual oral productions could be extremely difficult for a non-native speaker. It may take time for a non-native speaker to accommodate with the simple performance slips (e.g., I don't have no eaten yet).
5. Colloquial language means informal language that would be used in oral language of native speakers. Based on Brown's (2007) interpretations, "Idioms, slang, reduced forms, and shared cultural knowledge are all manifested at some point in conversations. Colloquialism appears in both monologues and dialogues. Contractions and other assimilations often pose difficulty for the learner of English." (p. 306)

6. Speed is a problem for many non-native speakers. The times of pauses used by a speaker sometimes are keys of how a context can be comprehended. When a context is long and with less pauses, the stream of speech will be faster and more difficult for a non-native speaker to catch. Raising awareness and keep paying sufficient attentions are skills that a learner can try to apply.

7. Stress, rhythm, and intonation for indicating sarcasm, endearment, insult, solicitation, praise, rejection, invitation, etc are important for understanding. In a limited time, a long sentence can be articulated by a native speaker quickly and clearly. For non-native speakers, they not only have to comprehend each syllable that was spoken, but also need to catch the implication and the pragmatic meanings from the long sentence in a short time.

8. Interaction usually is a frequent format of context for listening. A dialogue in the campus or a conversation between a doctor and a patient can be formats of interaction in listening contexts. Brown noted that "Conversation is especially subject to all the rules of interaction: negotiation, clarification; attending signals; turn-taking; and topic nomination, maintenance, and termination."(p. 307)

2. Current Trend of Interactive Format of Listening

These years, due to the trend of **globalization**, interactive model of listening is noticed and tested. In many tests such as **General English Proficiency Test (GEPT, 2009)** in Taiwan, **Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC, 2009)**, **International English Language Testing System (IELTS, 2009)** and **Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL, 2009)**, the listening abilities and responding to the comprehension questions were tested. The chief changes in the TOEFL these years, including the additional speaking section to test examinees' abilities of pronunciation and conversation. In order to perform well on listening, smart and sensitive ears are needed. The kind of the communication tasks may ask the test takers to (a) read a short paragraph,(b) listen to a response, and then (c) make an oral response. Throughout the new TOEFL, students' integrated listening and speaking skills are highly emphasized. After all, the final reason for learning English is for communication with the world practically and functionally.

3. Conclusion

Teaching listening skills needs a special attention. English listening proficiency can be built through training with proper orientation. The more we listen, the more effectively we can speak. English language speaking ambience needs to be created. Listening procedure and appropriate usage of listening techniques are paramount important in training the students. At the same time, the attention of the students has to be monitored constantly. In addition, they are allowed to take up the above mentioned language proficiency tests so that English language skills are significantly improved.

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