

SOME TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE LISTENING SKILLS

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Abstract

Listening is much more complex than the thought of human as tape recorders; they took in a bit of information, held it in a sort of medium-term memory, and used it. Listeners are actively paying attention and working on understanding and interpreting what they hear. When listening is considered as a difficult skill, it is all because of the characteristics of the message, the delivery, the listener, and the environment. Teaching listening skills is one of the most difficult tasks for any ESL teacher. This is because successful listening skills are acquired over time and with lots of practice. The key point about techniques is that some of them are teachable. Another point about the techniques is the teacher must be able to exemplify the techniques and show that it is effective. Finally, the techniques need to be repeatable; that is to say, it can be incorporated into the student's skill for dealing with such problems whenever they arise in the future.

Keywords: Listening, teaching, and technique.

Beberapa Teknik Mengajar Menyimak untuk Meningkatkan Kemampuan Menyimak

Abstrak

Pengertian menyimak sebenarnya lebih luas dari sekedar pikiran bahwa siswa dianggap sebagai mesin perekam. Penyimak harus secara aktif memperhatikan, memahami dan dapat menginterpretasikan apa yang mereka dengar. Ketika menyimak dianggap sebagai pelajaran yang sulit hal ini disebabkan oleh karakteristik pesan, cara penyampaian, pendengar, dan lingkungan. Mengajar menyimak bahasa asing bagi seorang guru terkadang juga dianggap hal yang sulit karena membutuhkan waktu yang lebih panjang dan latihan yang banyak. Yang terpenting tentang teknik/ metode yang akan diaplikasikan di dalam kelas adalah teknik tersebut mudah untuk diajarkan, teknik tersebut efektif dan teknik tersebut dapat dipakai berulang kali untuk meningkatkan kemampuan siswa dalam menyimak.

Kata kunci: Menyimak, mengajar, dan teknik mengajar.

A. INTRODUCTION

In the areas of second language acquisition research and second language teaching, listening has always been the most forgotten and least researched of the four macroskills (speaking, reading, writing, and listening). According to Helgesen, Brown, and Nunan, (2007: 4), for years people thought of listening and reading as passive skills while speaking and writing were active skills. Indeed, until the late 1970s, not much attention was paid to ESL and EFL listening at all. Prior to that, if it was thought about at all, listeners were thought of as human tape recorders: They took in a bit of information, held it in a sort of medium-term memory, and used it. We now recognize that listening is much more complex than that. Listeners are actively paying attention and working on understanding and interpreting what they hear. Instead of thinking of listening as passive, it is useful to understand it, along with reading, as a receptive skill.

Listening involves the decoding messages, it takes place over time. It is based on spontaneous performance, an invisible ink that usually disappears from the memory within second, Wilson (2008:11). Because the listening takes place over time, it makes the listener imagine them into being. Listening is considered as a difficult skill because of the characteristics of the message, the delivery, the listener, and the environment. That's why in the process of teaching we need to activate the listener's prior knowledge by some techniques to improve listening skill.

B. DISCUSSION

The focus of this writing will be in one of these specific areas, namely, the use of some techniques to improve listening skill. In this sense, understanding the techniques that more successful students use while listening will permit teachers to provide more and better opportunities for students (both successful

and less successful ones) to listen to and practice with different listening segments while making use of different techniques. This writing will promote the use and teaching of techniques for the listening skill as a means of making learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, and even more meaningful to students because they will be aware of what they are doing and why.

With literally hundreds of possible techniques available for teaching listening skills, this writing will only bring up to several kinds of listening performance—that is, what your students do in listening technique. Sometimes these types of performance are embedded in a broader technique or task, and sometimes they are themselves the sum total of the activity of a technique. As mentioned by Brown (2007:309)

1. Reactive

We sometimes want our students simply to listen to the surface structure of an utterance for the sole purpose of repeating it back to us. While this kind of listening performance requires little meaningful processing, it nevertheless may be a legitimate, even though a minor, aspect of an interactive, communicative classroom. In classroom, the students will become merely as tape recorder and very limited because is not generating meaning.

2. Intensive

This technique purpose is to focus on components (phonemes, words, intonation, discourse makers, etc). examples of intensive listening performance include these:

- a. Students listen for cues in individual drills.
- b. The teacher repeats a word or sentence several times.
- c. The teacher asks students to listen to a sentence or a longer stretch of discourse and to notice a specified element, such as intonation, stress, a contraction, a grammatical structure, etc.

3. Responsive

The students' task in such listening is to process the teacher talk immediately and to make an appropriate reply. Examples include

- a. Asking questions ("Are you okay?" "What's going on?")
- b. Giving commands ("Draw a conclusion.")
- c. Seeking clarification ("What did you say?")
- d. Checking comprehension ("How many people were in the class after the class began?")

4. Selective

Listening to a monologue for a couple of minutes or a little bit longer, the task of the student is not to process everything that was said, but rather to scan the material selectively for certain information. The purpose is to find important information. Examples of such discourse include

- a. Speeches
- b. Media broadcast
- c. Stories and anecdotes
- d. Conversations

Techniques promoting selective listening skills could ask students to listen for

- a. Peoples names
- b. Dates
- c. Certain facts or even
- d. Location, situation, context, etc.
- e. Main ideas and/or conclusion

5. Extensives

It could range from listening to lengthy lectures, to listening to a conversation and deriving comprehensive message or purpose. Extensive listening may require the student to invoke other interactive skills (e.g., note taking, and/or discussion) for full comprehension.

6. Interactive

Finally, there is listening performance that can include all five of the above types as learners actively participate in discussion, debates, conversations, role plays, and other pair of group work.

Another techniques appropriate for students mentioned by Harmer (2007:144), he applies the listening into audio and video; he recommended the teacher to play the video without sound, then play the audio without picture, freeze frame and dividing the class in half. He also provided six principles for listening: listen as much as possible, preparation is vital , once may not be enough, students should be encouraged to respond to the content of listening, not just the language, different listening stages demand different listening task, and the last is-good teachers exploit listening texts to the full.

Kenneth Beare, About.com Guide, giving his suggestion to the ESL teachers when he or she want to teach listening, Teaching listening skills is one of the most difficult tasks for any ESL teacher. This is because successful listening skills are acquired over time and with lots of practice. It's frustrating for students because there are no rules as in grammar teaching. Speaking and writing also have very specific exercises that can lead to improved skills. This is not to say that there are not ways of improving listening skills, however they are difficult to quantify. One of the largest inhibitors for students is often mental block. While listening, a student suddenly decides that he or she doesn't understand what is being said. At this point, many students just tune out or get caught up in an internal dialogue trying translate a specific word. Some students convince themselves that they are not able to understand spoken English well and create problems for themselves. They key to helping students improve their listening skills is to convince them that not understanding is OK. This is more of an attitude adjustment than anything else, and it is easier for some students to accept than others. Another important point that I try to teach my students (with differing amounts of success) is that

they need to listen to English as often as possible, but for short periods of time.

There are still many other techniques that a teacher can use and students can employ with, as a teacher we must be able to choose the best technique for the need of our students.

C. CONCLUSION

The key point about techniques is that some of them are teachable. In exam situations, teachers can point out the importance of predicting. What type of word (a noun, an adjective?) will go in the gap? What type of information (a name? a number?) is missing here? While listening to radio news headlines, students may be instructed to note down key words immediately. Training students to become good at listening is one of the most important things that teachers can do to develop students competence in the skill. Another point about the techniques is the teacher must be able to exemplify the techniques and show that it is effective, if it is purely mental process, the teacher cannot show it. Finally, the techniques need to be repeatable; that is to say, it can be incorporated into the student's skill for dealing with such problems whenever they arise in the future.

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