Strategies for Developing Listening Skills

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Abstract

There is a commonplace saying: “Be a good listener” which contains a great truth about our personal as well as social dealings. This is human nature that he wants to hear only his praise. Ordinarily listeners do not like to hear any criticism about them. It requires a level of maturity and patience to listen to unflattering things one may say about someone. In general listening implies the minimum of two people talking to each other. It is a process of matching of the mental faculties of the sender and the receiver. People doze in a lecture or in parliamentary debate because the speaker presents the problem in a dry and monotonous style. This is the situation of hearing. On the other hand, a good speaker with his wit and humor can make dry topic highly interesting. This paper focuses on the strategies for developing listening skills.
STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING LISTENING SKILLS

Listening skills are essential for learning since they enable students to acquire insight and information, and to achieve success in communicating with others. Life within and outside school affords many listening opportunities, but some students fail to seize them because they let their minds wander or they may concentrate on what they want to say themselves rather than on what a speaker is saying.

Listening is a communication method that requires the listener to understand, interpret, and assess what they hear. The ability to listen actively can improve personal interaction through reducing problems, increasing cooperation, and fostering understanding.

When interacting, people often are not listening carefully. They may be unfocused, thinking about other things, or thinking about what they are going to say next. Listening is a planned way of listening and responding to others, focusing attention on the speaker. There are three primary elements that comprise listening: comprehending, retaining, and responding.

Objectives of Listening

Students will extend their abilities to listen effectively in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes

Students will extend their abilities by practicing the behaviors of effective, active listeners

Students will extend their abilities to assess strengths in listening and set goals for future growth

Strategies for Developing Listening Skills

Language learning depends on listening. Listening provides the aural input that serves as the basis for language acquisition and enables learners to interact in spoken communication.

Effective language instructors show students how they can adjust their listening behavior to deal with a variety of situations, types of input, and listening purposes. They help students develop a set of listening strategies and match appropriate strategies to each listening situation.

Listening Strategies

Listening strategies are techniques or actions that provide directly to the comprehension and recall of listening input. Listening strategies can be classified by how the listener processes the input.

The listener taps into background knowledge of the topic, the situation or context, the type of text, and the language. This background information activates a set of expectations that assist the listener to interpret what he has heard and anticipate what he will hear next. These strategies are listener based-

- Listening for the major idea
- Predicting
- Drawing assumptions
- Cutting

The listener depends on the language in the message, that is, the arrangement of words, sound, and
grammar that creates meaning. These are text based -

- Listening for specific information
- Recognizing cognates
- Recognizing word-order patterns

Listeners who follow the strategies, they plan and evaluate their listening.

- They plan by deciding which will be the best listening strategies in a particular situation.
- They assess by determining whether they have achieved their listening comprehension goals

**Listening for Meaning**

To extract meaning from a listening text, students need to follow four basic steps:

- They should outline the purpose for listening. They should be active in background knowledge of the topic in order to calculate or predict content and identify suitable listening strategies.
- They should attend to the parts of the listening input that are important to the identified purpose and ignore the rest. This selectivity enables students to focus on specific items in the input and reduces the amount of information they have to hold in short-term memory in order to recognize it.
- They should select top-down and bottom-up strategies that are appropriate to the listening task and use them flexibly and interactively. Students' comprehension improves and their confidence increases when they use top-down and bottom-up strategies simultaneously to construct meaning.
- They should check knowledge while listening and when the listening task is ended. This helps students to detect comprehension failures, directing them to apply other strategies.

**Focus: The Listening Process**

To achieve this goal, instructors focus on the process of listening rather than on its product.

- They develop students' awareness of the listening process and listening strategies by asking students to think and talk about how they listen in their native language.
- They allow students to practice the full repertoire of listening strategies by using authentic listening tasks.
- They behave as authentic listeners by responding to student communication as a listener rather than as a teacher.
- When working with listening tasks in class, they show students the strategies that will work best for the listening purpose and the type of text. They explain how and why students should use the strategies.
- They have students practice listening strategies in class and ask them to practice outside of class in their listening assignments. They encourage students to be conscious of what they're doing while they complete listening tape assignments.
They encourage students to evaluate their comprehension and their strategy use immediately after completing an assignment. They build comprehension checks into in-class and out-of-class listening assignments, and periodically review how and when to use particular strategies.

They encourage the development of listening skills and the use of listening strategies by using the target language to conduct classroom business: making announcements, assigning homework, describing the content and format of tests.

They do not assume that students will transfer strategy use from one task to another. They explicitly mention how a particular strategy can be used in a different type of listening task or with another skill.

By raising students' awareness of listening as a skill that requires active engagement, and by explicitly teaching listening strategies, instructors help their students develop both the ability and the confidence to handle communication situations they may encounter beyond the classroom. In this way they give their students the foundation for communicative competence in the new language.

**Advantages of being a good listener**

1. If you learn how to listen to others, the others will listen to what you have to say as well, they will respect you because you show respect to them by listening. You're words will have a greater influence on other people. This is a great thing! Just imagine having a greater influence on your children, friends, family, work colleagues. Wouldn't this be wonderful?

2. By being a good listener, you can learn more about the people you talk to, you can make new friends and have a better life, both personal and professional. What if you could be good friends with almost everyone you talk to? How would you feel if your boss was your friend? How about your neighbors, colleagues or even customers? It can all be possible if you only listen to others more.

3. By becoming a good listener you could even improve existent relationships. When people will see that you've become more attentive to what they say they will treat you better and you will then realize the importance of listening. Just think: wouldn't you treat someone better if they were listening to you and support you?

4. Having good listening skills will help you improve conversation skills. This way you will be able to avoid a lot of misunderstandings or confusions. You could also stop possible conflicts even before they start. As you see there are some important benefits of being a good listener, and I'm sure you can dig out more if you try. You should always remember that by doing active listening activities you will become better and better at this. So, what are you waiting for? You should be out there, improving listening skills right now?

**Strategies for listening**

**Before listening: Plan for the listening task**

- One should decide the purpose in advance what one wants to listen.
- One should decide if more background information is needed
- One should determine to attend to the overall meaning or focus on the words and phrase
During and after listening: Monitor comprehension

- One should confirm predictions and check for inaccurate guesses.
- One should decide what is important to understand and what is not important to understand.
- One should view again to ensure comprehension.
- One should ask for help if needed.

After listening: Evaluate comprehension and strategy use

- One should assess comprehension in a particular area.
- One should evaluate overall progress in listening and in particular types of listening tasks.
- One should come to a decision if the strategies used were suitable for the purpose.
- One should modify strategies if necessary.

Using genuine Materials and Situations

Genuine materials and situations prepare students for the types of listening they will need to do when using the language outside the classroom.

One-Way Communication

Materials:

- Radio and television programs
- Public address announcements (airports, train/bus stations, stores)
- Speeches and lectures
- Telephone customer service recordings

Procedure:

- It helps students to identify the listening goal.
- It obtains specific information; to decide whether to continue listening; to understand most or all of the message.
- It helps students outline predictable sequences in which information may be presented.
- It helps students identify key words/phrases to listen for.

Two-Way Communication

In authentic two-way communication, the listener focuses on the speaker's meaning rather than the speaker's language. The focus shifts to language only when meaning is not clear. Note the difference between the teacher as teacher and the teacher as authentic listener in the dialogues in the popup screens.

Listening Activities

What sounds are the same, different

Use paper, tin sheet, aluminum foil, or any substance that comes in sheets; produce sounds in various
ways: by crinkling, rubbing, tearing, waving, shredding, wrapping, scratching, etc. One child does the action, the rest with eyes closed; have to guess how the sound was made. Practice the vocabulary beforehand.

**Sharing with the group**

Students sit in a circle and share a conversation with the others and the teacher. They also share journals, diaries, stories, and maths and science experiences

**Colors Exercise**

Students sit face to face with a partner. One partner will say a color, e.g. Green. Other responds: “Green”. One partner says another color: “Grey”, other responds: “Grey”. One partner says another color. Each time other responds back with the color one partner said. Increase the speed at which one partner responds to the other person. As soon as he starts to say a color, other responds until one partner is almost saying the colors at the same time. It will be a surprising result. By the end of the exercise both partner will be saying colors at the same time. . The point of this activity is to become aware that we can tune into someone else's space much farther than we currently do. We have the capability to focus and pay attention in ways that we usually don't.

**Acting out a story**:

This is another good listening activity, and at the same time it is also very helpful to develop imagination, pretending, pantomiming and physical coordination. It is of great help to the shy student since he is acting together with the other children and therefore is not in evidence himself. Students enjoy this activity very much, and derive great pleasure when acting it out. It is also a good moment for observing the children, their actions and reactions to the story!

The teacher starts telling the story while the students act out the different actions that appear in it. There are no further instructions given. It is left to the students to listen carefully and to imagine how and to do it.

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