



THE ROLE OF LISTENING IN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: THE CHALLENGES & STRATEGIES IN TEACHING LISTENING

JERLIN SUSHMITHA N.

M. Phil Research Scholar

Deptt. of English

Deptt. Of English

St. Antony's College of Arts and Sciences For Women,

Dindigul. (TN) INDIA.

ABSTRACT

Listening, the very basic language skill is consistently interrelated and intervened with the other language skills - speaking, reading and writing. The challenges towards teaching listening are now better understood because of the new strategies contributing to effective listening and moreover the widespread availability of technology supports the language learners in enhancing their listening skills. Still, the assessment of their listening skills, remain far behind the current views of listening and hence innovations to be made to renovate the teaching or learning of listening. This paper deals with the prime importance of listening in language acquisition and the challenges in attaining listening competence and suggests some strategies to overcome it. Second language listening is a complex process, crucial in the development of second language competence. Listeners use both bottom-up processers and top-down processes to comprehend. Knowing the context of a listening text and the purpose for listening greatly reduces the burden. Teachers can help students develop sound strategies through a process approach to teaching Language listening. This will help students learn how to listen and develop the metacognitive knowledge and strategies crucial to success.

Keywords: *Listening, Learning, Language skills, Teaching skills and Language Acquisition*

LISTENING-AN INCLUSIVE SKILL IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Listening has an important place in learning as it is one of the four major skills in language acquisition. Even though the other skills such as reading, speaking and writing are essential to develop language proficiency, listening contributes primarily for language expertise. Listening awakens understanding of the language as it is a interested skill that first develops in a human being. Learning to listen to the target language improves language ability. The sound, rhythm, intonation, and stress of the language can only be perfectly adapted through listening. To understand the nuances in a particular language, one must be able to listen. As

JERLIN SUSHMITHA N.

1Page



we get to understand spoken language by listening it is easier to improve the other skills and gain confidence. Of the four language skills, the one that is always neglected in grammar instruction is definitely Listening. In the typical grammar lesson, the target grammar structure is hardly ever practiced through the aural medium. This may not only negatively force gaining of that structure, but also listening proficiency development at large.

The parsing phase is the stage in the comprehension of auditory input in which the listener recognizes a grammar pattern in a string of words and fits it to the surrounding linguistic context. This important stage is top not simply to listening but also to gaining.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING IN COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

Listening is the most significant part of communication as it is fundamental in providing a extensive and meaningful response. Especially in learning a language for communicative purpose, listening plays a vital role, as it helps the language learner to obtain pronunciation, word stress, vocabulary, and syntax and the comprehension of messages conveyed can be based solely on tone of voice, pitch and accent; and it is only possible when we listen. Without understanding input appropriately, learning simply cannot get any step up.

TEACHING LISTENING-THE CHALLENGES

According to Yagang (1994), the problems in listening were accompanied with the four following factors: the message, the speaker, the listener and the physical setting. The problems were believed to cause by the speech rate, vocabulary and pronunciation.

As Flowerdew & Miller (1996) assumed that the problems of the students were for the speed of delivery, new jargon and concept, difficulty in focusing and the physical environment. The main reasons why the learners feel listening difficult are:

- 1) Lack of effort to understand each and every word while listening. Especially in Language attainment they are unable transfer their skill of the first Language easily to a second language.
- 2) Failure or laziness to build up their vocabulary steadily and this greatly reflects in their listening and keeps them low spirited in acquiring the language skills.
- 3) Listeners problem with different pronunciation, accents as they stick to one particular verbalization.

4) Listener's absorption power or listening resistance greatly influences their listening skills, which is not so in the case of acquiring the other language skills (reading, speaking and writing) even when they are carried for a longer period of time.

5) Distraction by the physical setting or the environment in which listening is to be carried out. This becomes an added challenge for an average learner and a main tackle even for good listeners.

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING OF LISTENING

Listening strategies are techniques or activities that contribute directly to the recall of listening input. In the recent days, a number of listening strategies have been formulated to match with every different listening situation and because of this, in teaching listening skills, the language learners are facilitated in getting adjusted to their listening behavior to deal with a variety of situations, types of input, and listening purposes. Listening strategies can be broadly classified as Top-down strategies and Bottom-up strategies. Top-down strategies are listener based; the listener relies on the background knowledge of the topic, the listening context, the text type, and the language and they help the listener to interpret the ideas he has listened. Top-down strategies are for

- Listening For The Main Idea
- Predicting
- Drawing Inference
- Summarizing On the other hand, Bottom-up strategies are text based where the listeners use linguistic knowledge to understand information. Here the listener relies on the language in the message, that is, the combination of sounds, words, and grammar to arrive at the final message. Bottom-up strategies are to
- Concentrate on specific details while listening
- Recognize word-order patterns.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, it can be said, without listening skills, language learning is impossible. This is because there is no communication where there is no human interaction. Also, listening is decisive not only in language learning but also for learning other subjects. But even today, with all the technological advancements in the field of education, learners have problems with listening. The main reasons are: they spend too little time to improve their listening skills; the inappropriate strategies tested on them in a learning setting may be an important reason for their poor listening comprehension. The problems are also caused from the listening material and physical settings. To acquire high level listening skills, more exposure is given to the learners with variety of listening. Listeners can use both bottom-up processors

(linguistic knowledge) and top-down processes (prior knowledge) to comprehend. Teachers should play an important role in teaching learners strategies and how to apply them into the listening task. They can help students develop sound strategies for comprehension through a process approach to teach listening. These are some suggestions to overcome the challenges in listening as well as to upgrade the listening skills of students. Listening can best be developed with practice when students reflect on the process of listening without the threat of evaluation. Using listening activities to only test comprehension leads to anxiety which debilitates the development of metacognitive strategies. Strategy use positively impacts self-concept, attitudes, about learning and attributional beliefs about personal control. Guiding students through the process of listening not only provides them with the knowledge by which they can successfully complete a listening task it also motivates them and puts them in control of their learning.

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