

PECULIARITIES OF TEACHING AND TRAINING LISTENING IN THE PROCESS OF TEACHING ENGLISH

Natalia HIOARĂ

Academia de Studii Economice din Moldova

Limba este cel mai important mijloc de comunicare interumană. A poseda limba înseamnă a o putea folosi în scopuri comunicative, ceea ce presupune schimb de informație la nivel oral și scris. În acest context, în lucrarea dată se examinează problema însușirii deprinderilor de audiere (înțelegere orală) în cadrul procesului de predare-învățare a limbii engleze.

Listening is one of the most important ability that a non-English-speaking student needs. Such ability is a crucial tool that aids the learning process. Listening is the most frequently used language activity. Listening is a complex developmental challenge to be intertwined with many other developmental accomplishments: attention, memory, language, and motivation. So, listening as a skill assumes more and more weight in source language or foreign language classrooms than ever before. In language learning and teaching there exist different listening techniques. Real-life listening situations differ greatly from a usual classroom listening because the language is informal and spontaneous, usually people take turns, pronunciation is not often clear because of the speaker or noise environment, usually words are shortened, vocabulary is colloquial and grammar tends to be ungrammatical. But the most striking feature of real-life listening is that the speech is never repeated. Language must be taught in an integrative way where all four skills are focused. Thus, listening is of great importance to both learning in general and especially second language learning. Listening is important because the ability to understand what others say is essential for communicative interaction.

It should be taken into account that the level of listening input must be higher than the level of language production of the target learners. So, language teaching pedagogy must incorporate academic and designed listening practice. Obviously listening influences other skills.

Listening as a skill is important because it is the most frequently used language activity. An average adult spends approximately three times as much time listening as reading. Listening is a skill related to a psychic process distinguishing from hearing: Hearing involves just perceiving sound in a passive way while listening presupposes an active and immediate analysis of the streams of sounds.

Listening is a complex process in which many things happen simultaneously inside the mind. The listening process basically involves seven steps: The person communicating (i) has his purpose in mind and (ii) produces the oral symbols which will carry his ideas across. The person receiving the communication (iii) hears the oral symbols, (iv) recognizes and interprets them, (v) selects what he wants (vi) to comprehend or to retain so that he can (vii) respond or react.

Spoken language is different from its written variation. It is not organized, does not consist of complete sentences and is full of interruptions, hesitations and repetition and does not necessarily contain a lot of information. Hence students are exposed to authentic speech instead of artificial dialogue or written speech which is read.

Listeners would have "expectations" about how a conversation might go, what they are going to hear and what their interlocutor is going to say. The implication is that there should be *pre-listening* activities to prepare students for what they will hear. People listen for a purpose and they have a specific reason for listening. Hence it is vital that students are asked to listen for something during their *while-listening* exercises. Often spoken language is simply for social interaction and not for exchange of ideas or information. Language learning depends on listening. Listening provides the aural input that serves as a basis for language acquisition and enables learners to interact in spoken communication.

In language learning and teaching there exist different techniques for listening:

I. Top Ten Listening Techniques recognized by language teachers. Listening seems like a simple process and yet so many of us are more eager to talk than to listen. Here are some tips:

1. Stay present. Do not let your mind wander. Many are composing a response before the speaker has a chance to completely finish his / her thought.

2. **Make eye contact.** Let the speaker see your interest by regularly making eye contact.
3. **Ask questions for clarification;** This is not your time to respond. Get really clear about what is being said. If you do not understand, ask questions in an open non-charged manner.
4. **Acknowledge feelings.** If the speaker is telling you something about his / her feelings, acknowledge them. You do not have to agree to show that you see the speaker is upset or happy about something.
5. **Restate or paraphrase.** Make sure you are getting the information the speaker is presenting by periodically repeating what you hear in different words the speakers;
6. **Seek first to understand and then to be understood.** Before you state your thoughts and ideas make sure you totally understand and acknowledge the speakers thoughts.
7. **Give nonverbal feedback** – While the speaker is speaking, be sure to smile, nod, and frown.
8. **Shrug your shoulders, or raise your eyebrows,** whatever is appropriate.
9. **Silence.** Do not be afraid of this. Periods of total quiet will allow you and the speaker to think about what was said. When you are sure the speaker has completed his/her thoughts on the subject it will be time for you to comment. Take in all the information both verbal and nonverbal. Focus on the meaning of what is being said and also what is not being said;
10. **Get permission.** Sometimes people just want to be heard. At other times they are seeking advice. Give advice only when requested and only after the person has had a chance to give you the whole story. If you are not sure, ask if the person is looking for your input.

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

III. Top-down strategies are listener based; the listener taps into background knowledge of the topic, the situation or context, the type of text, and the language. This background knowledge activates a set of expectations that help the listener to interpret what is heard and anticipate what will come next. Top-down strategies include: a) listening for the main idea; b) predicting; c) drawing inferences; d) summarizing.

IV. Bottom-up strategies are text based; the listener relies on the language in the message, that is, the combination of sounds, words, and grammar that creates meaning. Bottom-up strategies include: a) listening for specific details; b) recognising cognates; c) recognising word-order patterns. Strategic listeners also use **metacognitive strategies** to plan, monitor, and evaluate their listening: 1) They plan by deciding which listening strategies will serve best in a particular situation; 2) They monitor their comprehension and the effectiveness of the selected strategies; 3) They evaluate by determining whether they have achieved their listening comprehension goals and whether the combination of listening strategies selected was an effective one. Active listening is a way of listening and responding to another person that improves mutual understanding. 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.

Teaching listening requires a bit more on the part of the teacher than that of the learners. One of the main principle of teaching listening should be language material intended to used for training listening comprehension should never be presented visually first. Good listening lessons go beyond the main listening task itself with related activities before and after the listening. The format may be like the following: **I. Pre-Listening Stage:** Some activities before listening may serve as preparation or warm-up for listening in several ways. These function as ‘reference’ and ‘framework’ by giving prior knowledge of listening activities. Some recommended per-listening activities include: a) introducing the topic and assessing their background knowledge of the topic or content of the material through commenting on a picture or photograph; b) activating their existing knowledge through discussion. Reading through comprehension questions in advance, working out own opinion on a topic, predicting content from the title etc. can be done; c) clarifying any necessary contextual information and vocabulary to comprehend the text. In this regard showing pictures maps or graphs and may be helpful; d) informing them of the type of text, their role, purposes of the listening etc. A short reading passage on a similar topic may help them. **II. While-Listening Stage:** activities in this stage must follow the learners’ specific needs, instructional goal, listening purposes and learners’ proficiency level. While listening activities directly relate to the text and listeners are asked to do these during or immediately after listening. Some specific cares are required in designing while-listening activities. These are: a) if the students are asked

to give written information after listening, they should have chance to listen the text more than once which makes it easier for them to keep concentration while listening with specific purposes; b) Writing activities should be to a minimum. As comprehension is the prime target, writing would make the listening more demanding; c) global activities like getting the main idea, topic, setting, summary that focus on the content and forms of the text should be given more so that listeners are guided through the text. Listening for the gist is such an activity; d) more questions should be set up in order to focus student's attention on the crucial elements that might help to comprehend the text. Following the rout on a map or searching for specific clues to meaning, or identify description of the given pictures might be appropriate here; e) attaching predicting activities before listening so that students can monitor their comprehension as they listen. Listening with visuals may serve here; f) giving immediate feedback to make the students examine their responses and how it was. Listening activities here become varied according to their purposes and objectives. Four major distinctions include *Attentive listening*, *extensive listening*, *intensive listening*, *selective listening* and *interactive listening*.

Listening is a complex process in which many things happen simultaneously inside the mind. The listening process basically involves seven steps: the person communicating has his purpose in mind and produces the oral symbols which will carry his ideas across. The person receiving the communication hears the oral symbols, recognizes and interprets them, selects what he wants to comprehend or to retain so that he can respond or react.

Bibliography:

1. Cadrul european comun de referință pentru limbi: învățare, predare, evaluare. - Chișinău: S.n., 2003. - 204 p.
2. Plotnic VI. Metodica predării consoanelor engleze la etapa încercătoare//Научная конференция по итогам научно-исследовательской работы за 1967 год. Секция общ. и гум. наук. - Кишинёв, КГУ, 1968, с.243-244.
3. Țâmbal Gh. Metode și tehnici didactice interactive // LR. - 2005. - Nr.12. - P.115-118.
4. Гальскова Н.Д., Гез Н.И. Теория обучения иностранным языкам: Лингводидактика и методика. - Москва: Academia, 2004. - 336 с.
5. Гринько Г. Значение результатов контрастивного анализа для преподавания двух иностранных языков как специальности//Наукова спадщина професора С.В. Семчинського і сучасна філологія. Збірник наукових праць. Частина перша. - Київ: ВПЦ «Київський університет», 2001, с.274-279.
6. Колкер Я.М., Устинова Е.С., Еналиева Т.М. Практическая методика обучения иностранному языку. - Москва. - Academia. - 2004. - 264 с.
7. Маслыко Е.А., Бабинская П.К., Будько А.Ф., Петрова С.И. Настольная книга преподавателя иностранного языка. - Минск: Вышэйшая школа, 2003. - 522 с.
8. Миньяр-Белоручев Р.К. Методика обучения французскому языку. - Москва: Просвещение, 1990. - 224 с.
9. Мучник А.И. О роли родного языка в процессе обучения иноязычной речи // ИЯВШ. Вып. 7. - Москва: Высшая школа, 1972, с.11-19.
10. Рогова Г.В. Методика обучения английскому языку. - Москва: Просвещение, 1983. - 351 с.
11. Уэст М. Обучение английскому языку в трудных условиях. - Москва: Просвещение, 1966. - 116 с.
12. Щерба Л.В. Преподавание иностранных языков в средней школе. Общие вопросы методики. - Москва. - Высшая школа, 1974. - 112 с.

Prezentat la 28.05.2010