Teaching Listening

Preparing the foundation for all aspects of language

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Use of language skills in daily life

- Listening: 40%
- Speaking: 30%
- Reading: 16%
- Writing: 9%
Do school curricula reflect this use?

• “… classroom emphasis on language modes is inversely related to the time people use them: students get 12 years of training in writing, 6-8 years in reading, 1-2 years in speaking and from 0 -1/2 year in listening.”

  –Burley-Allen

  “the ‘inverted curriculum’” – Swanson
## Processes of Effective vs. Less Effective NNS Listeners

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Effective Strategies</th>
<th>Less Effective Strategies</th>
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<tr>
<td>Perceptual</td>
<td>Maintain focus by selective attention</td>
<td>Focus on all words, lose concentration when encountering unknown word Less intelligible</td>
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<td>Strong O.I. skills, good self-monitors</td>
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<td>Parsing</td>
<td>Listen for Larger Chunks, incorporated both top down and bottom up processing</td>
<td>Stuck at word level, had segmenting problems</td>
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<td>Utilization</td>
<td>Draws understanding from world knowledge, person experience, self questioning</td>
<td>Makes poor use of schema, deals poorly with ambiguity</td>
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Purposes for Listening

• Listening for sounds
• Listening to segment speech
• Listening for meaning
• Listening for comprehension
• Listening for a specific purpose
• Listening for pleasure
• Listening to improve pronunciation
Listening processes and purposes

Bottom-up processing
- Processing input as the source of information about meaning
- Enables listener to:
  - recognize individual sounds
  - hear word boundaries
  - understand vocabulary
  - use grammar cues to interpret sentence

Top-down processing
- Processing input by using background knowledge to understand
- Allows listener to use:
  - prior knowledge of topic
  - situational or context clues
  - understanding of overall structure of events and relationships
Two functions of language important to listening

Interactional uses of English-
The primary purpose for communication is social and to establish interactions between participants.
(listener-oriented)

Transactional uses of English-
The language is being used mainly for communicating information or carrying out a transaction.
(message-oriented)
Both *interactional* and *transactional* uses of language use both top-down and bottom-up processing. Therefore it is important to teach and give practice in both top-down and bottom-up skills.
Learning Outcomes for Bottom up Processing in Listening
Learning Outcomes for bottom-up processing

• recognize word boundaries
• distinguish vowels, consonants, clusters
• distinguish key words
• notice transitions
• note word-order patterns
• interpret stress and intonation
• retain input
• act on commands, requests, instructions
Learning outcomes for Top Down Listening
Learning Outcomes for top-down processing

• Use key words to construct background ideas
• Understand roles or participants in a situation
• Infer topic, outcome, cause/effect, sequence of events
• Distinguish between fact and opinion
• Isolate important details from non-important
• Understand intention and tone in conversation
• Draw upon previous knowledge, schema
In actual, “real life” listening situations

• The listener has some idea of what he/she is about to hear

Implication for ESL classroom:
Provide S’s info about content, situation, speakers
“Real life” listening situations

• Require “real-time” learner (listener) response

Implication for ESL classroom

Teachers should require brief S responses between listening segments
In “real life” listening situations

• The speaker is visible

Implications: use fewer audio recordings unsupported by illustrations
“Real life” listening situations

• Have all sorts of environmental clues
  Such as
    background noise, facial expressions, gestures, posture, eye direction, tone

Implications in class:
  Be more expressive for lower levels, provide more visual cues
“Real life” listening situations

• Have noise that interferes with comprehension, such as
  Background noise, mumbling or mispronunciation by speaker, gap

Implication for class:
  Adapt: eliminate noise, provide clear speaking or recording, allow repetition
“Real life” listening situations

• Are usually informal, rather than formal
  For example:
  idiomatic, false starts, imperfect grammar,
  full of fillers, intermittent speed, varying
  volume, wider intonation ranges

Implications:
  Teach idioms, do some adaptation
Types and purposes of Listening Activities

1. Word level
2. Sentence level
3. Listening for comprehension
4. Listening and short response
5. Listening and making longer responses
Word level

- **Oral activities**
  - repetition of words, one or two, same or different, how often do you hear it, how many syllables

- **Read/write activities**
  - circle which word you hear, write the right word, number words/pictures in order
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- Tajam pen
- Pensil
- Kertas
- Pulpen
- Jam
- Buku
- Lampu
- Pintu
- Meja
- Kursi
- Papan tulis
- Jendela

FROM: More Picture Stories
Sentence level

• Oral activities
  – repetition of short phrases or complete utterances
  – How many words?
  – Q & A

• Read/write activities
  – underline stressed (or unstressed) words
  – Dictation
  – Q & A
Listening for Comprehension

- **Aural activities**
  - Listen to a familiar text
  - Listening aided by visuals
    - pictures, objects in the room, diagrams, maps
  - Informal teacher talk

- **Read/write activities**
  - Listen while reading
  - “Entertainment” - songs, stories, film and TV

- **Oral/read/write activities**
  - Jazz Chants
  - Make your own cloze
Banker’s Wife’s Blues

Where does John live?
   He lives near the bank.

Where does he work?
   He works at the bank.

When does he work?
   He works all day
   and he works all night,
   at the bank, at the bank,
   at the great, big bank.

Where does he study?
   He studies at the bank.

Where does he sleep?
   He sleeps at the bank.

Why does he spend all day, all night,
   all day, all night,
   at the bank, at the bank?
   Because he loves his bank
   more than his wife
   and he loves his money
   more than his life.

FROM: Jazz Chants
Carolyn Graham
Listening and Short Response

- **Aural activities**
  - Obeying instructions, following directions
  - Guess what I’m describing/defining?
- **Read/Write activities**
  - Picture dictation, listen and mark off (like Bingo), True/False activities, detecting mistakes
  - Aural cloze, noting specific information
  - Pictures (identify, sequence, change, mark)
  - Maps, floor plans, grids, graphs
Listening and Making Longer Responses

- Oral/Read/Write activities
  - Q & A (time lapse = comprehension, not perception)
  - Restating, summarizing
  - Predictions
  - Conflicting versions
  - Problem solving
  - Jigsaw listening
  - Debate
And effective because it rivets the attention of your students:

TRUE STORY
Summing it up

The best activities for teaching listening are:

° Purposeful
° Interactive
° Success oriented, motivating
° Include informal elements of English
° Include environmental clues
° Immediately useful
References:
Penny Ur, *Teaching Listening Comprehension*
Jack Richards, *The Language Teaching Matrix*