

TYPES OF LISTENING ACTIVITIES

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Annotation: This article focuses on the role of listening activities in the improvement of students listening skills and the usage of different activities and procedures provide the development of the listening for communicative tasks.

Keywords: listening, skills, activity, communication, stages of listening, contextualization, preparation, motivation.

Listening is one of the most challenging skills for students to develop and yet also one of the most important. By developing their ability to listen well teachers develop students' ability to become more independent learners, as by hearing accurately they are much more likely to be able to reproduce accurately, refine their understanding of grammar and develop their own vocabulary [1; 32].

In this work we intend to outline a framework that can be used to design a listening lesson that will develop students' listening skills and look at some of the issues involved.

The basic framework on which a teacher can construct a listening lesson can be divided into three main stages:

- Pre-listening, during which teachers help students prepare to listen.
- While listening, during which teachers help to focus their attention on the listening text and guide the development of their understanding of it.
- Post-listening, during which teachers help students integrate what they have learnt from the text into their existing knowledge.

Pre-listening

There are certain goals that should be achieved before students attempt to listen to any text. These are motivation, contextualization, and preparation [4; 156].

Motivation. It is enormously important that before listening students are motivated to listen, so a teacher should try to select a text that they will find interesting and then design tasks that will arouse students' interest and curiosity.

Contextualization. When we listen in our everyday lives we hear language within its natural environment, and that environment gives us a huge amount of information about the linguistic content we are likely to hear. Listening to a tape recording in a classroom is a very unnatural process. The text has been taken from its original environment and teachers need to design tasks that will help students to contextualize the listening and access their existing knowledge and expectations to help them understand the text.

Preparation. To do the task teachers set students while they listen there could be specific vocabulary or expressions that students will need. It's vital that teachers cover this before they start to listen as we want the challenge within the lesson to be an act of listening not of understanding what they have to do.

While listening. When we listen to something in our everyday lives we do so for a reason. Students too need a reason to listen that will focus their attention. For students to really develop their listening skills they will need to listen a number of times - three or four usually works quite well - as practice shows the first time many students listen to a text they are nervous and have to tune in to accents and the speed at which the people are speaking [2; 235].

Ideally the listening tasks should guide them through the text and should be graded so that the first listening task they do is quite easy and helps them to get a general understanding of the text. Sometimes a single question at this stage will be enough, not putting the students under too much pressure.

The second task for the second time students listen should demand a greater and more detailed understanding of the text. Make sure though that the task doesn't demand too much of a response. Writing long responses as they listen can be very demanding and is a separate skill in itself, so keep the tasks to single words, ticking or some sort of graphical response [3; 24].

The third listening task could just be a matter of checking their own answers from the second task or could lead students towards some more subtle interpretations of the text.

Listening to a foreign language is a very intensive and demanding activity and for this reason we think it's very important that students should have 'breathing' or 'thinking' space between listening.

Post-listening. There are two common forms that post-listening tasks can take. These are reactions to the content of the text, and analysis of the linguistic features used to express the content [4; 26].

Reaction to the text. Of these two we find that tasks that focus students' reaction to the content are most important. Again this is something that we naturally do in our everyday lives. Because we listen for a reason, there is generally a following reaction. This could be discussion as a response to what we've heard - do they agree or disagree or even believe what they have heard? - or it could be some kind of reuse of the information they have heard.

Analysis of language. The second of these two post-listening task types involves focusing students on linguistic features of the text. This is important in terms of developing their knowledge of language, but less so in terms of developing students' listening skills. It could take the form of an analysis of verb forms from a script of the listening text or vocabulary or collocation work. This is a good time to do form focused work as the students have already developed an understanding of the text and so will find dealing with the forms that express those meanings much easier [4; 27].

There are numerous activities to choose from for developing listening skills. T. Lund has categorized them according to eight responses that can be observed as comprehension checks [4; 27-28]:

Choosing: the listener selects from alternatives such as pictures, objects, texts, or actions;

Transferring: the listener transforms the message such as drawing a route on map, or filling in a chart;

Answering: the listener answers questions about the text;

Condensing: the listener takes notes or makes an outline;

Extending: the listener goes beyond the text by continuing the story or solving a problem;

Duplicating: the listener simply repeats or translates the message;

Modeling: the listener performs a similar task, e.g. gives instructions to a coworker after listening to a model;

Conversing: the listener is an active participant in a face-to-face conversation. [5; 48].

Variety of listening activities helps to explore some ways to help students which acquire the confidence to use their skills for self-expression in language situations. Different activities and procedures provide the development of the listening for communicative tasks and for extracting general or certain specific points in the discourse.

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