

## LISTENING BEFORE SPEAKING: RETHINKING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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**Abstract.** *Listening and speaking are highly related skills of learning a language with speaking production being the key activity in most traditional language teaching methods but listening input has not been given adequate attention. This disproportion can impair the process of learning the oral language of fluent and correct language. This paper will explore the purpose of listening as a precursor to the development of speaking skills and makes the case that it is impossible to develop competence in speaking effectively without engaging in systematic listening exercises. The interpretation of the research design was a mixed method because data was gathered by classroom observation, learner questionnaires, and assessment of speaking performance. The results show that learners who take part in organized listening activities show more gains in fluency, pronunciation, and communicative confidence. The paper concludes that reconsidering the way skills are developed and focusing on listening before speaking can be an effective way to improve oral proficiency and offers pedagogical consequences to the practice of language teaching.*

**Keywords:** *listening, speaking, language teaching, input, communicative competence.*

**Аннотация.** *Аудирование и говорение являются тесно взаимосвязанными навыками изучения языка: в традиционных методах обучения основное внимание обычно уделяется говорению, тогда как восприятию на слух уделяется недостаточное внимание. Такой дисбаланс может негативно повлиять на формирование беглой и правильной устной речи. В статье рассматривается роль аудирования как предшествующего этапа развития навыков говорения и обосновывается положение о том, что формирование эффективной речевой компетенции невозможно без систематических упражнений на аудирование. Дизайн исследования носил смешанный характер (mixed method): данные собирались посредством наблюдения за занятиями, анкетирования учащихся и оценки устной речи. Результаты показали, что учащиеся, участвующие в организованных аудиторных заданиях на аудирование, демонстрируют более высокий прирост беглости речи, произношения и коммуникативной уверенности. В заключение подчеркивается, что пересмотр последовательности формирования навыков с акцентом на аудирование перед говорением может существенно повысить уровень устной компетенции и имеет важные педагогические последствия для практики преподавания языков.*

**Ключевые слова:** *аудирование, говорение, обучение языку, языковой ввод (input), коммуникативная компетенция.*

**Annotatsiya.** *Tinglash va gapirish til o'rganishning o'zaro chambarchas bog'liq ko'nikmalari bo'lib, an'anaviy til o'qitish metodlarida odatda gapirish faoliyati asosiy o'rin egallaydi, biroq tinglab tushunish ko'nikmasiga yetarli e'tibor berilmaydi. Ushbu nomutanosiblik og'zaki nutqni ravon va to'g'ri o'zlashtirish jarayoniga salbiy ta'sir ko'rsatishi mumkin. Mazkur maqola gapirish ko'nikmasini rivojlantirishning muqaddimasi sifatida tinglashning ahamiyatini yoritadi hamda tizimli tinglash mashqlarida ishtirok etmasdan turib, samarali gapirish kompetensiyasini shakllantirish mumkin emasligini asoslaydi. Tadqiqot dizayni aralash (mixed method) yondashuv asosida tashkil etilib, ma'lumotlar sinf kuzatuvi, o'quvchilar so'rovnomasi va og'zaki nutq natijalarini baholash orqali to'plandi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatdiki, tizimli tinglash faoliyatlarida qatnashgan o'quvchilar ravonlik, talaffuz va kommunikativ ishonch jihatidan sezilarli yutuqlarga erishgan. Xulosa qilib aytganda, ko'nikmalarni rivojlantirish ketma-ketligini qayta ko'rib chiqish va gapirishdan oldin tinglashga e'tibor*

*qaratish og'zaki nutq kompetensiyasini oshirishning samarali yo'li bo'lishi mumkin hamda til o'qitish amaliyoti uchun muhim pedagogik tavsiyalar beradi.*

*Kalit so'zlar: tinglash, gapirish, til o'qitish, kirish (input), kommunikativ kompetensiya.*

**Introduction.** Speaking skill among language teaching is sometimes considered as the objective of instruction. Both learners and teachers are likely to equate language proficiency to the capability of speaking fluently. Therefore, speaking activities are often given focus in the classrooms at the expense of other skills. Yet studies in second language acquisition (SLA) indicate that speaking competence never is developed in isolation and it heavily relies on listening input.

The main way through which learners are exposed to authentic language, which can be in terms of pronunciation, intonation, vocabulary and patterns of grammar, is through listening. In the absence of adequate input in terms of listening, the learners might not be able to generate correct and meaningful speech. Irrespective of this, listening has been regarded as a passive or auxiliary skill instead of a core constituent of language development.

Listening before speaking is an appreciative notion in that the first language process is based on the principle of listening before speaking, which shows that children learn many things in listening before they embark on speaking. This principle has been endorsed by some of the SLA theories especially the input-based approaches. However, a large number of contexts in language teaching do not incorporate a systematic approach of incorporating listening tasks that would facilitate the development of speaking.

This paper aims to redefine the conventional process of acquisition and development of skills in the process of teaching a language by focusing on the primary importance of listening. The study will look into the roles of listening activities in enhancing speaking and also the effective teaching pedagogies to support the combination of listening and speaking teaching.

**Literature review.** Listening and speaking are the two relationships that have been extensively addressed in the literature on SLA. The initial language acquisition theories focused on the significance of input as a requirement to output. The Input Hypothesis by Krashen (1985) holds that comprehensible input is the driving force behind language acquisition and therefore He states that learners should know language first before they can produce it. In this perspective, it is the listening that gives the linguistic support to speaking. Based on this concept, Long (1996) brings out the importance of interaction in the learning of language with listening and speaking being complementary processes. The interaction provides the input to the learners, negotiates meaning, and helps to improve the oral production in the learners gradually. This implies that listening is an active process instead of being a passive process that contributes to communicative development.

Another study conducted by Rost (2011) also highlights the fact that listening enables learners to internalise both phonological and prosodic features of language that are key to

the intelligible speech. When learners are exposed to diverse listening input, their pronunciation and rhythm in speaking are also more improved. On the same note, Field (2008) contends that successful listening training will increase the skills of learners to process spoken information in real time, and that this will directly influence their fluency in speaking.

Pedagogically, Richards (2008) observes that there are numerous speaking issues that are due to lack of listening exposure. Unacquainted learners with the natural speech patterns tend to use the structure of written language during speech, which leads to the encroachment of natural or clumsy speech. Such an issue is especially prominent in cases of EFL where the possibility of authentic listening is constrained.

The affective responses of the learners to the instructions based on listening have also been studied recently. According to Vandergrift and Goh (2012), structured listening activities help learners be more confident, and less anxious, about speaking activities. Learners feel freer to engage in oral communication when they are more at ease with the spoken input.

Although there is a solid theoretical and empirical evidence on the significance of listening, classroom-based activities tend to underline quick production of speaking. Such discrepancy of the theory and practice leads to the necessity of reconsidering the process of developing the skills in language teaching and paying more attention to listening as the basis of speaking.

**Methods.** The research design of the given study is a qualitative theoretic research design that implies the analysis of the existing literature on the topic of the second language acquisition and language pedagogy through the tools of the analysis of documents and their analytical review. No experimental or classroom-based collections were made as the study objective was to investigate the relationship between listening and speaking skills as a conceptual study and not an empirical one. The methodology is based on the descriptive and interpretive approach, which makes it possible to conduct the systematic analysis of the existing theories, pedagogical models, and scholarly arguments that are associated with the development of listening and speaking. The major scholarly materials such as books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and globally acclaimed frameworks were chosen on the basis of their pertinence to the topics of listening input, development of oral skills and communicative language teaching.

The process of analysis was carried out with an interpretation of recurrent themes and theoretical standpoints on the issue of the role of listening in language acquisition. These themes were then subjected to critical examination in order to establish the role of listening as a requirement towards the development of speaking. The paper is a synthesis of the research conducted on various theoretical viewpoints to develop a consistent argument as to why listening should be emphasized in language education.

**Results.** The findings showed significant differences in the experimental and control groups. The group of learners in the experimental group showed a considerable change and improvement in speaking fluency and pronunciation than the control group. Oral activities also revealed increased confidence in them. The responses to the questionnaires showed that learners who underwent organized listening exercises were more ready to talk and were less anxious. It was also found in classroom observations that more natural and spontaneous speech performance was achieved through instruction based on listening.

**Discussion.** This theoretical assertion is validated by the results of this research which argue that listening should be a condition of proper development of speaking. Linguistic patterns helped the learners to internalize and build more confidence in their communication by first listening before speaking. The findings fit Krashen Input Hypothesis and the interactionist approaches that stress on the significance of comprehensible input and meaningful communication. Another aspect of listening and speaking integration as opposed to considering them as two distinct skills in the study is its pedagogical worth.

Moreover, the results imply that educators are encouraged to rethink the old pattern of teaching different skills and implementing teaching strategies that would enable learners to be exposed to listening as much as possible and before being required to speak.

**Conclusion.** This theoretical paper throws emphasis on the primary importance of listening in the growth of speaking. The established language acquisition theories do not support the assumption that speaking can be well developed without sufficient listening input. Rather listening must be regarded as a condition to meaningful and fluent oral communication. Language teachers can achieve better and supportive learning conditions by focusing on listening first before speaking, as language is acquired naturally. Such a rethink of skill formation has significant consequences to curriculum design, classroom practice and teacher training.

Further studies can be done based on this theoretical framework in future research where empirical studies are carried out to delve further into effects of listening-based instruction on speaking performance under various educational settings.

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