

THE ROLE OF LISTENING COMPREHENSION IN COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Annotation. The following article is written with an aim of explaining the current role of listening comprehension in communicative language teaching (CLT), the challenges faced by learners and effective strategies to overcome those problems.

Key words. Listening skill, comprehension, pronunciation, challenges, strategies.

Аннотация. Следующая статья написана с целью объяснить текущую роль аудирования в коммуникативном обучении языку (CLT), проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются учащиеся, и эффективные стратегии преодоления этих проблем.

Ключевые слова. Навык аудирования, понимание, произношение, проблемы, стратегии.

INTRODUCTION

Listening is the most significant part of communication as it is pivotal in providing a substantial and meaningful response. Especially in learning a language for communicative purpose, listening plays a vital role, as it helps the language learner to acquire **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 improvement. In addition, without listening skill, no communication can be achieved. Also, every study conducted regarding the language skills acquisition has proved that when we communicate, we gain 45% of language competence from listening, 30% from speaking, 15% from reading and 10% from writing. With the highest percentage of involvement in the exchange of information in effective communication, listening has to be considered a language forerunner. Listening, unlike the other language skills, is felt comparatively much difficult by the learners, as it has all its interrelated subskills such as receiving, understanding, remembering, evaluating, and responding. But with the advent of communicative language-teaching and the focus on proficiency, the learning and teaching of listening started to receive more attention. However, listening is not yet fully integrated into the curriculum and needs to be given more attention in a language learning setting.

MAIN BODY

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 terminology and concept, difficulty in focusing and the physical environment. The main reasons why the learners feel listening difficult are:

- i. Lack of effort to understand each and every word while listening. Especially in L2 acquisition they are unable transfer their L1 skill easily to a second language.
- ii. Failure or laziness to build up their vocabulary gradually and this greatly reflects in their listening and keeps them low spirited in acquiring the language skills.
- iii. Listeners problem with different pronunciation, accents as they stick to one particular articulation.
- iv. Listener's concentration power or listening stamina 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.
- v. 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 confront even for good listeners.

Listening activities generally induces the anxiety and stress among the learners as it involves the interpersonal and interpretive modes of communication in which he/she has to actively participate. Mainly, unlike other language skills it is not at learner's control and may be done at variable speeds as it is not at the complete control of the listener at all settings.

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 crucial 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 comprehension. Knowing the context of a listening text and the purpose for listening greatly reduce the burden of comprehension. 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.

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