

ASSESSING LISTENING SKILLS IN THE CLASSROOM

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Abstract: This article is about how to rate listening skill in the classroom. Everybody knows that listening is vital skill, along with other skills such as reading, writing, and speaking.

Keywords: Assessing, Listening, Language classroom, using songs and videos.

Introduction

One of the main reasons for getting students to listen to spoken English in to let them hear different varieties and accents. In today's world they need to be exposed not only to one variety of English (British English, for example) but also to varieties such as American English, Australian English, Caribbean English, Indian English or West African English. There are number of ways in which listening activities differ from other classroom exercises: Firstly, Tapes go at the same speed for everybody. Unlike language study or speaking practice or even reading, where individual students can read (to some extent) at their own pace the tape continues even if individual students are lost. Unlike reading listeners to a tape cannot flick

back to a previous paragraph, re – read the headline, stop to look at the picture and think for a bit before continuing. On the contrary, they have to go with the speed of the voice (s). They are listening to. Of course, they can stop tapes and rewind them but essentially, the speed of the speaker (s) dominates the interaction not that of listener.

Knowing how to listen is the cornerstone to effective communication. Students cannot be successful in school if listening skills are not developed and honed. Teachers can assess students' listening skills by conducting a few simple activities. Record the results from the activities and develop an action plan addressing how to improve listening skills if needed. If you believe hearing is a problem, and not listening advise the student's parents to consult an audiologist.

Effective, modern methods of teaching listening skills encompass everything from interactive exercises to multimedia resources. Listening skills are best learned through simple, engaging activities that focus more on the learning process than on the final product. Whether you are working with a large group of students or a small one, you can use any of the following examples to develop your own methods for teaching students how to listen well.

Interpersonal Activities

One effective and nonthreatening way for students to develop stronger listening skills is through interpersonal activities, such as mock interviews and storytelling. Assign the students to small groups of two or three, and then give them a particular listening activity to

accomplish. For example, you may have one student interview another for a job with a company or for an article in a newspaper. Even a storytelling activity, such as one that answers the question “What was your favorite movie from last year?” can give students the opportunity to ask one another questions and then to practice active listening skills.

Group Activities

Larger group activities also serve as a helpful method for teaching listening skills to students. You can begin with a simple group activity. For the first part, divide students into groups of five or larger and instruct them to learn one hobby or interest of at least two other group members. Encourage them to ask clarifying questions during the activity, and you may allow them to take notes if helpful. However, as time passes and their skills grow, you should limit students to only writing notes after the completion of the first part of the group activity. For the second part, have the students sit in a large circle, and then have each individual student share the name and the hobby or interest of the group members that she or he met. This second part of the group activity can also lend itself to additional listening exercises. For example, you may ask students to name a number of the hobbies and interests identified during the sharing session.

Audio Segments

You can also teach listening skills through audio segments of radio programs, online podcasts, instructional lectures and other audio messages. You should model this interactive listening process in class with your students, and then instruct them to repeat the exercise on their own. First, instruct students to prepare for listening by considering anything that they will want to learn from the content of the audio segment. Once they have written down or shared these ideas, then play the audio segment, allowing the students to take notes if helpful. Once they have gained confidence and experience, repeat this activity but instruct students to not take notes until the completion of the audio segment. You can use shorter or longer audio segments, and you can choose more accessible or more challenging material for this type of exercise.

Video Segments

Another helpful resource for teaching listening skills are video segments, including short sketches, news programs, documentary films, interview segments, and dramatic and comedic material. As with audio segments, select the portion and length of the video segment based on the skill level of your students. With your students, first watch the segment without any sound and discuss it together. Encourage the students to identify what they think will be the content of the segment. Then, watch the segment again, this time with sound, allowing students to take notes if helpful for their skill level. After the completion of the video segment, you can have students write a brief summary of the segment, or you can take time to discuss as a group how the segment compares with the students’ expectations.

Instructional Tips

Whatever method you use for teaching listening, keep a few key instructional tips in mind that will help both you and your students navigate the learning process. One, keep your expectations simple, as even the most experienced listener would be unable to completely and accurately recall the entirety of a message. Two, keep your directions accessible and build in opportunities for students not only to ask clarifying questions, but also to make mistakes. Three, help students navigate their communication anxiety by developing activities

appropriate to their skill and confidence level, and then strengthen their confidence by celebrating the ways in which they do improve, no matter how small.

Conclusion

Assessment is an integral aspect of the pedagogical process of designing lessons, implementing them, and evaluating their success. Without an assessment component in every listening activities and every course, we couldn't determine the attainment of objectives and goals. To assessing listening we have to considered to what levels and what assessment methods appropriate to our students. We have also consider too the micro and macro skills of listening, from processing tiny bits and pieces of language to strategic, interactive, and complex skills of extended discourse.

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