



8

Listening: The Cinderella Skill, and Its Pivotal Role in the Language Classroom

Mohsinkhan Rathod, Ph.D Scholar, Indian Institute of Teacher Education, Gandhinagar, Gujarat

Page no. 72-76

Abstract: This paper discusses the importance of the Receptive Skill, listening. The author wants to highlight the importance of listening skills, as far as the English as a Second Language Classroom is concerned. This paper deals with the theoretical aspects of listening skill, listening comprehension, as well as the pivotal role of the teacher in English classrooms. Moreover, it elaborates on the vivid tasks for enhancing the most overlooked skill, listening, in the language classroom.

Keywords: Receptive Skills, Listening Skill, Listening Comprehension, Tasks for Listening Skill, Importance of Listening,

Introduction

Communication is a process of exchanging thoughts, feelings, ideas, information, etc., with another person. The cycle of communication is only completed when the receiver sends feedback to the sender. To give feedback to the sender, the most important skill among all the language skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing, the listening skill is one of the pivotal skills.

Listening involves an active concern of an individual. Listening involves a sender, a message and a receiver. It is the psychological course of action of receiving, attending to, constructing meaning from and responding to spoken or non-verbal messages (Tyagi, 2013, p.1).

According to Tyagi (2013), Listening encompasses some of the key components, which are indicated as under:

- Discriminating between sounds
- Recognizing words and understanding their meaning
- Identifying grammatical groupings of words,
- Identifying expressions and sets of utterances that act to create meaning,
- Connecting linguistic cues to non-linguistic and paralinguistic cues,
- Using background knowledge to predict and to confirm meaning and
- Recalling important words and ideas.

The process of listening occurs in five stages. They are hearing, understanding, remembering, evaluating, and responding (Tyagi, 2013, p.2).

This paper focuses on the most overlooked skill, listening in the area of research and its vital role so far as the English as a Second Language learning classroom is concerned. The elementary language skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These four language skills are associated to each other. These language skills are divided into Productive skills i.e. speaking and writing, and Receptive skills i.e. listening and reading. Without the active role of listening no speaking can be feasible and without reading no writing can be possible. So, the four skills go in pairs. They are interwoven with each other. Nevertheless, listening is the



Cinderella skill which is overlooked by its elder sister, speaking in second language learning (Nunan, 2001, p.51).

In general, it is believed that listening skill is a natural skill. Due to this conviction, it has been neglected so far as the systematic study and the area of research is concerned. The first research in the field of listening did not appear until the year 1971 (Cayer, Green, and Baker, 1971).

Listening Skill

Listening skill plays a pivotal role so far as language learning process is concerned. It is not merely the process of to proceed to particular sound or text, but also the course of action to comprehend the meaning out of particular language. In the process of language acquisition, listening is the most preceding skill. It is considered to be a constant flow or an active process, the listeners have to have analyzed and comprehend the provided information simultaneously.

Listening comprehension is an active process of conveying meaning and this is can be done by applying acquaintance to the incoming sound in which numbers of different types of knowledge i.e. linguistic and non – linguistic knowledge are involved. “Comprehension is affected by a wide range of variables and that potentially any characteristic of the speaker; the situation or the listener can influence the comprehension of the message”. (Gary Buck, 2001, p.31)

“Listening Comprehension has two common senses. In its narrow sense it denotes the mental processes by which listeners take in the sounds uttered by a speaker and use them to construct an interpretation of what they think the speaker intended to convey.... Comprehension in its broader sense, however, rarely ends here, for listeners in general put the interpretations they have built to work”. (Clark and Clark, 1977, pp. 43-44)

“listening is adjudged successful when the listener is able to comprehend the message of the speaker”

“listening is adjudged successful when the listener is able to comprehend the message of the speaker”

“listening is adjudged successful when the listener is able to comprehend the message of the speaker”

Definitions of Listening skill

“Listening is a complex cognitive process that allows a person to understand spoken language” (Rost, 2005, p.503).

Listening means to “the act of paying attention; thoughts, interpretation and imagination” (Saricoban, 2010, p.112).

“Listening refers to an active and dynamic process of attending, interpreting, perceiving, remembering and responding to the expressed needs, concerns and information offered by other human beings.” (Purdy, 1997, p.83)

Importance of Listening

In the entire language organism listening is considered to be fundamental skill. It is being well established prior to other skills i.e. speaking, writing and reading. “We can expect to listen a five times more than we write, four times more than we read, and twice as much we speaks” (Morley, 1991, p. 82).

Listening skill revolves around the listener’s background knowledge like, his/her comprehension power, life experiences, culture of society, semantics of language, and vocabulary. Without obtaining any input no learning can be happen.

Listening comprehension is an extremely complex cognitive process. One can properly comprehend the provided message if he/she has the necessary knowledge of grammar,



discourse, and socio-linguistics. Listening skills require proper concentration on inferring the message. By giving complete attention to the sound, the listener can comprehend the message.

Listening is important for the following reasons: it is the key component of effective communication, it is the most important part in communication, it is important for productive collaboration, and it is crucial when someone to learn effectively. (Eatough, 2022, p.83)

Listening is important because it occupies a big chunk of the time we spend communicating in the language, provides input that can be very significant for second language acquisition in general and the development of the speaking skill in particular, and promotes non-linear processing of language and encourages learners to develop "holistic" strategies to texts (M. Karimova, et al., 2020, pp.400-402).

Listening is now recognized as an interpretive process in which listeners actively construct meaning based on expectations, inferences, intentions, prior knowledge, and selective processing of the input (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Anderson & Lynch, 1988).

The expansion of listening skills in English as a foreign language holds a particular significance, as it underpins effective communication in today's world (Richard, R., 2002). Despite its vital role, listening skills are repeatedly overlooked in numerous educational settings, leading to a deficiency of focus, motivation, and appropriate content for learners. (Maley, 1998, p.99)

Thus, listening skill plays a very essential role as far as the English as a Second Language classroom is concerned.

Various Strategies to Enhance Listening Skills

There are two general types of strategies: direct strategies and indirect strategies. Learning strategies are specific actions taken by the learners to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations. (Oxford, 1990, p.17)

The taxonomy of language learning strategies is provided below:

❖ Direct Strategies

➤ Memory strategies

- The memory strategies conveys the acquired information to the long term memory

➤ Compensation Strategies

- It helps learners to comprehend the input to make logical assumptions and by referring to body language

➤ Cognitive Strategies

- It helps the learners to make inference out of what is there in schema

❖ Indirect Strategies

➤ Metacognitive Strategies

- It enables the self-learning process of learners for proper organization, evaluations and planning

➤ Social Strategies

- It assistances the learners to communicate with the society in organized way

➤ Affective Strategies

- It provides motivations, controls emotions and feelings of the learners so far as learning process is concerns

The Role of Teacher in the Language Classroom



So far as English as a Second Language (ESL) Classroom is concerned, teacher plays a pivotal role as a facilitator. Teaching of listening skill is so difficult task because one can acquire it by much more practice. It is time consuming process as well.

ESL teachers are supposed to provide systematic opportunities to learners to learn how to comprehend the particular conversation or utterance as well as the attitude and mood of the speaker (Underwood, 1989, p.22).

The various roles of the teacher are indicated as below:

- A Facilitator:
 - A teacher should provide the support to learners to explore the new spectrums so far as language learning process is concern.
- A Manager:
 - A teacher should have quality of perfect classroom management techniques. So that the classroom learning process can run smoothly and the learners can achieve the desired goals.
- An Evaluator:
 - As an evaluator the teacher should highlight the competence and the comprehension level of the learners rather than to point out the weaknesses of the learners.

Tasks for Listening Skill

Generally, there are three kinds of task for listening, which are known as pre-listening task, while-listening task and post-listening task. Pre-listening task should be based or prepared upon the Schema of the learners. Pre-listening tasks should be consisted of various activities, which can enhance and expand the comprehension level of listening skill (Underwood, 1989, p.25). The activities are supposed to be reflective so far as ESL learners are concerned.

There are varieties of tasks like:

- Matching activities
- Fill in the gap activities
- Multiple type choice based question
- True-false activities..., etc.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have discussed about the importance of listening skill so far as language classroom is concerned as well as its wide scope in area of research. I have also set out some theoretical aspects of listening comprehension. This paper also deals with the crucial role of the teacher in the language classroom. It also focuses about the varieties of task, its implementation in language classroom for the advancement and enhancement of the most overlooked language skill, listening.



Works Cited

- 1) Buck, Gary. *What Practitioners Say about Listening: Research Implications for the Classroom*. *Foreign Language Annals*, vol. 17, 2001, pp. 31.
- 2) Cayer, R. L., Green, J., and E. E. Baker, Jr. *Listening and Speaking in the English Classroom: A Collection of Readings*. Macmillan, 1971.
- 3) Clark, H. H., and E. V. Clark. "Listening Comprehension and the Input Hypothesis." *TESOL Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 4, 1977, pp. 43–44.
- 4) Eatough, E. "7 Types of Listening That Can Change Your Life and Work." *BetterUp*, 2022, <https://www.betterup.com/blog/types-of-listening>.
- 5) Flowerdew, J., and L. Miller. *Second Language Listening: Theory and Practice*. Cambridge University Press, 2005. https://assets.cambridge.org/97805217/86478/frontmatter/9780521786478_frontmatter.pdf.
- 6) Karimova, M., et al. "Importance of Listening Skill in Learning English." *International Journal on Integrated Education*, vol. 3, no. 12, 2020, pp. 400–402. <https://doi.org/10.31149/ijie.v3i12.1040>.
- 7) Maley, Alan. *Listening*. Oxford, 1998.
- 8) Morley, J. "Listening Comprehension in Second or Foreign Language Instruction." *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*, edited by M. Celce-Murcia, 2nd ed., Newbury House, 1991, pp. 81–106.
- 9) Nunan, D. *New Ways in Teaching Listening*. TESOL, 2001.
- 10) Purdy, M., et al. *Listening in Everyday Life: A Personal and Professional Approach*. University Press of America, 1997.
- 11) Rost, M. "Listening." *The Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*, edited by R. Carter and D. Nunan, Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 7–13.
- 12) Saricoban, A. "The Teaching of Listening." *The Internet TESL Journal*, vol. 5, no. 12, 2010.
- 13) Tyagi, B. "Listening: An Important Skill and Its Various Aspects." *The Criterion*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2013, <https://the-criterion.com/V4/n1/Babita.pdf>.
- 14) Underwood, M. *Teaching Listening*. Longman, 1989.