UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA DEL ESTADO DE HIDALGO

INSTITUTO DE CIENCIAS SOCIALES Y HUMANIDADES

IMPROVING LISTENING COMPREHENSION SKILLS: DEVELOPING LISTENING SUBSKILLS

MONOGRAFÍA

QUE PARA OBTENER EL GRADO DE

LICENCIADO EN

ENSEÑANZA DE LA LENGUA INGLESA

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Pachuca, Hgo.   2010

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INTRODUCTION

Expressing our wants, feelings, thoughts and opinions clearly and effectively is only half of the communication process needed for interpersonal effectiveness. The other half is listening and understanding what others communicate to us. When a person decides to communicate with another person, he/she does so to fulfil a need. The person wants something, feels discomfort, and/or has feelings or thoughts about something. In deciding to communicate, the person selects the method or code which he/she believes will effectively deliver the message to the other person. The code used to send the message can be either verbal or nonverbal. When the other person receives the coded message, they go through the process of decoding or interpreting it into understanding and meaning. Effective communication exists between two people when the receiver interprets and understands the sender's message in the same way the sender intended it.

The decision for selecting this topic comes from the need of EFL students to improve their listening skills with a particular focus on specific problems. During my years as a student of the BA program, I felt that we had certain difficulties in listening comprehension when we started to take translation lessons. These limitations ranged from lack of extra linguistic knowledge to failure to guess the meaning of new lexical items and predicting what the speaker is going to say. The intention of this paper is then, to suggest some possible solutions to these problems.

In order to better understand the nature of listening and the problems related to learning and developing listening skills this paper briefly looks into the nature of

listening and the listening process itself. In addition, it analyzes some basic principles for teaching listening that can help to create techniques and activities to improve the development of listening skills and sub skills. It also looks into the listening sub skills and some approaches which help develop this area of language learning concluding with a proposal for remediating those areas of learning to listen which are in my view, relevant for students in our context.

This paper has six chapters. The first chapter mentions the Nature of listening Comprehension and its process. The second chapter is designated to skills of listening comprehension and its classification. The third section talks about the factors affecting listening comprehension, the role the speaker and listener have in this process and the relationships between listening and speaking and how speaking affects it. The fourth part explains the differences between learning and acquisition and learning and teaching and how these processes take part in this work. The fifth chapter illustrates listening comprehension strategies and how they are used according to the listening process. Finally, in the last section mentions the ways in which listeners can use strategies to facilitate the listening process.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To look into ways for improving Listening Comprehension and further developing specific sub skills to answer to specific problems that students face in different scenarios, namely 1) lack of extra linguistic knowledge, 2) failure to guess the meaning of new lexical items, and 3) predicting what the speaker is going to say.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To look into the nature of listening comprehension and the factors which affect the acquisition of listening skills and sub skills.

- To look into teaching approaches and strategies in which Mexican students can be trained to develop listening skills and sub skills in English as a foreign language.

CHAPTER I

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

The importance of listening is enormous. People often focus on their speaking ability believing that good speaking equals good listening and communication. The ability to speak well is a necessary component to successful listening. The ability to listen is equally as important. In order to better understand what this work is about, this first chapter looks into the concept of listening and the difference between hearing and listening. A second part of this chapter looks at how the process of listening comprehension occurs.

1.1 The Nature of Listening Comprehension

Listening is the Cinderella skill in second language learning (Nunan, 1999). It became fashionable again in the 1980s when Krashen's ideas about comprehensible input gained prominence. By stressing the role of comprehensible input, second language acquisition research has given a major boost to listening. As Rost (1994) points out, of the four language skills— speaking, listening, reading and writing, listening is the most critical for language learning at early stages. Large amounts of listening practice before speaking or reading may prepare the learner to acquire a second language with a greater efficiency than if he or she was taught all the skills simultaneously (Postovsky, 1974; Winitz & Reeds, 1973, 1975; Winitz, 1973; Gary, 1978). In fact, listening is the most frequently used language skill in everyday life. Researchers (for example, Rivers 1981; Morley, 1991) propose that we listen twice as much as we speak, four times as much as we read, and five times as much as we write. Lister

is a highly integrative skill and research demonstrates its crucial role in language acquisition (for example, Rost, 1990; Feyten, 1991; Mendelsohn & Rubin, 1995). Listening is assuming greater and greater importance in foreign language classrooms.

Different ideas as to the nature of listening comprehension have been advanced throughout time. In the past, listening was thought of as a passive skill (Matthew, 1979). The listener was much like a container that was filled with information derived from sounds, words, and structures. It was believed that once one could handle these successfully, all that was needed was to put these "building blocks" together and become proficient in this language skill as a whole. As a result, the teaching of this skill was based on exercises and activities concerned with the meaning of isolated sentences. There was no attempt to teach the learner to understand the message of a text as a whole (Winitz, 1981).

At present, however, listening comprehension is viewed as a more complex operation in which the listener plays a very active role. In the listening process the components of perception, linguistic knowledge and knowledge of the world are integrated by the listener to "construct" a message from a stream of sounds produced by the speaker (Brown and Yule, 1983). As it can be seen listening comprehension involves more than just one component.

The nature of LC (listening comprehension) shows that the learner should be encouraged to concentrate on an active process of listening for meanings, using not only the linguistic cues but his nonlinguistic knowledge as well. He should also know

that not every clue is equally important to the message (Brown, 1986). Therefore, even when he misses a piece of language, he does not need to worry: there is a good chance that other clues will make him understand the message, or at least, enough of the message for his own aim. Of course, it may be that the missed item is one which completely changes the whole message. This does not concern the general point being made here; since the learner has more hope of realizing his own misunderstanding if he concentrates on the communication rather than being distracted by a sense of failure.

There do exist controversies on the nature of listening comprehension. According to Anderson and Lynch (1988), there are two influential views: the traditional view and the alternative view. **The Traditional view** regards the listener as a tape-recorder and the listener took in and stored aural messages in much the same way as a tape-recorder. Anderson and Lynch (1988) criticized this view as inappropriate and inadequate. This notion is not a tenable one. **The Alternative view** considers the listener as an active model builder. This kind of listener combines the new information with his previous knowledge and experience to reach full comprehension of what has been heard. Anderson and Lynch (1988) agreed with this view. It emphasized the active interpretation and integration of incoming information with prior knowledge and experience. O' Malley and Chamot (1989) made a conclusion by doing a research on Listening Comprehension: "Listening is an active and conscious process in which the listener constructs meaning by using cues from contextual information and existing knowledge, while relying upon multiple strategic resources to fulfill the task requirement" (O' Malley, & Chamot, 1989,p.420).

Among the various definitions of Listening Comprehension, a representative one is propounded by Clark and Clark (1977, pp.43-44). They give both a narrow and broad definition:

"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 normally put the interpretations they have built to work."

Lynch and Mendelsohn (Cited in Norbert Schmitt, 2002, p- 194) describe the unique features of listening as follows:

- Its usually ephemeral, one-shot nature.

- The presence of a rich prosody (stress, intonation, rhythm, loudness and more), which is absent from the written language.

- The presence of characteristics of natural fast speech, such as assimilation, making it markedly different from written language.

- The frequent need to process and respond almost immediately.

Anderson and Lynch (1988, p.11) suggest the term "mental model" to refer to this alternative view of listening comprehension. According to these authors, "the mental model that we build as a presentation of spoken message is the result of our combining the new information in what we have just heard with our previous knowledge and experience".

According to this view, background knowledge plays a key role in understanding a spoken message. This type of knowledge covers general factual knowledge, local factual knowledge, knowledge of the situation, etcetera.

Widdowson (1978) makes a useful distinction between "hearing" and "listening". He uses *"hearing"* to refer to the listener's ability to recognize language elements in the stream of sounds and, through his knowledge of the phonological and grammatical systems of the language, to relate these elements to each other in clauses and sentences and to understand the meaning of these sentences. He reserves "listening" to refer to the ability to understand how a particular sentence relates to what else has been said and its function in communication. It is at this stage that the listener selects what is relevant to this purpose and rejects what it is irrelevant.

Background knowledge

- Factual
- Sociocultural

Procedural Knowledge

- How language is used in discourse

Schematic Knowledge

Knowledge of situation

- Physical setting, participants, etc.

Context

Knowledge of co-text

- What has been /will be said

Knowledge of the language system

- Semantic
- Syntactic
- Phonological
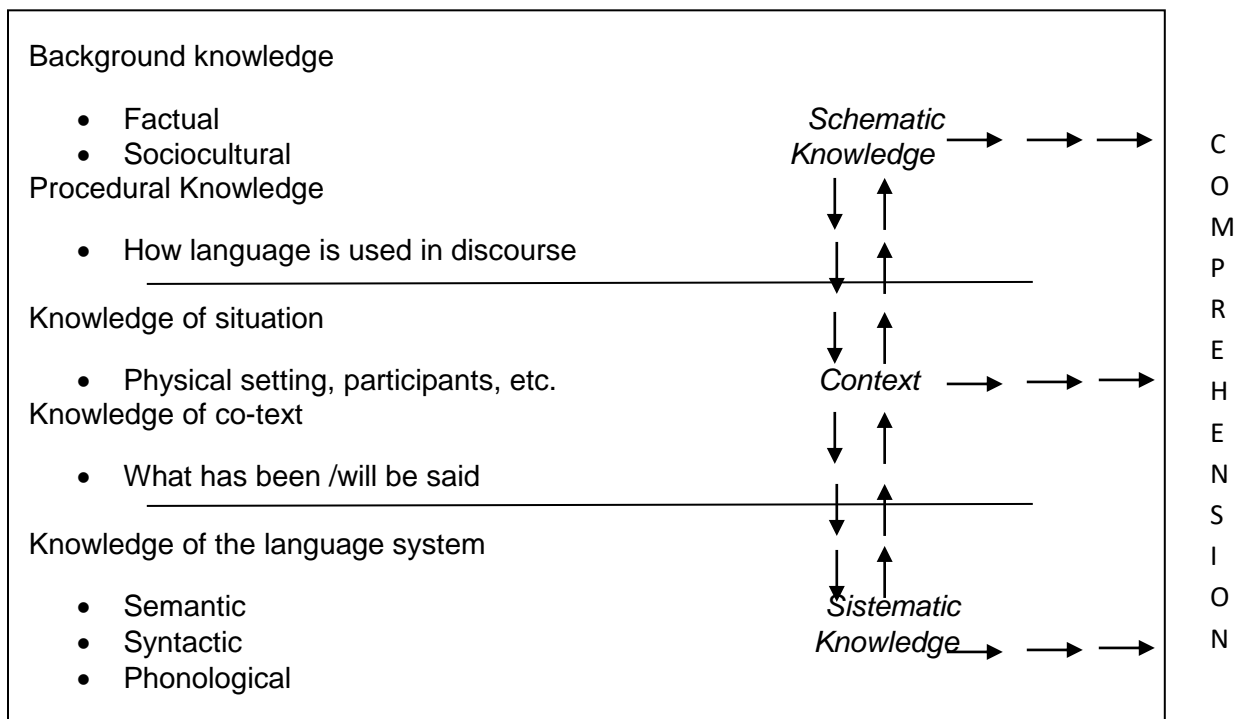
Sistematic Knowledge

C O M P R E H E N S I O N

Figure 1, Adapted from Anderson and Lynch (1988, p. 13), summarizes the different kinds of information that the listener uses to process a spoken message.

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This shift in the way of looking at listening comprehension has brought about changes in teaching approaches. Recent trends tend to follow what is known as a whole-to parts approach. In this approach the listener is encouraged to "fit everything he hears into a context" (Rixon, 1984).

Furthermore, Rixon (1984) develops the skill of guessing the meaning of unknown words or phrases from the context. Also, the listener is taught to build up expectations about he will hear, and use to help himself understand the message.

Another important skill that is taught to learners is that of using the grammatical context to "decipher" a difficult pronunciation (Smitt, 1986). As we know, native speakers have little difficulty understanding messy pronunciations.

1.2 The process of listening comprehension.

Listening is an invisible mental process, making it difficult to describe. Listeners must discriminate between sounds, understand vocabulary and grammatical structures, interpret stress and intention, retain and interpret this within the immediate as well as the larger socio-cultural context of the utterance (Wipf, 1984).Cognitive psychology, the most developed model in accounting for comprehension processes, defines comprehension as information processing. Schemata are the guiding structures in the comprehension process. The schema is described by Rumelhart (1980, p. 34) as "a data structure for representing the generic concepts stored in memory. It can be used to represent   knowledge about all concepts: those underlying objects, situations, events, sequences of events, actions and sequences of actions." According to the cognitive comprehension theory, "Schema" (plural form schemata) means an abstract

textual structure that the listener uses to make sense of the given text. The listener makes use of linguistic and situational cues and also the expectations he/she has about the new input to evoke schemata. When a schema has been evoked, it will become a guiding structure in comprehension. If the incoming information is matched with the schema, then the listeners have succeeded in comprehending the text; if they are not compatible, either the information or the schema will be discarded or modified. The principle of schema leads to two fundamental modes of information processing: bottom-up processing and top-down processing. These two processing intersect to develop an interactive processing. Thus, models for listening process fall into three types.

1.2.1 ***Bottom-up process*** (the first type of models) is activated by the new incoming data. The features of the data pass into the system through the best fitting, bottom-level schemata. Schemata are hierarchically formed, from the most specific at the bottom to the most general at the top. It acknowledges that listening is a process of decoding the sounds, from the smallest meaningful units (phonemes) to complete texts. Thus, phonemic units are decoded and connected together to construct words, words are connected together to construct phrases, phrases are connected together to construct utterances, and utterances are connected together to construct complete, meaningful text. That is to say, meaning is arrived at as the last step in the process. A chain of incoming sounds trigger schemata hierarchically organized in a listener's mind— the phonological knowledge, the morphological knowledge, lexical and syntactical knowledge (syntactical knowledge aids to analyze the sentence structure). Thus, the listener makes use of "his knowledge of words, syntax, and grammar to

work on form" in the bottom-up processing (Rubin, 1994, p. 210). This process is closely associated with the listener's linguistic knowledge. However, bottom-up processing has its weak points. Understanding a text is an interactive process between the listener's previous knowledge and the text. Efficient comprehension that associates the textual material with listener's brain does not only depend on one's linguistic knowledge.

1.2.2 *Top-down process* (the second type) is explained as employing background knowledge in comprehending the meaning of a message. Carrell and Eisterhold (1983, p. 557) point out that in top-down processing, the system makes general predictions based on "a higher level, general schemata, and then searches the input for information to fit into these practically satisfied, higher order schemata". In terms of listening, the listener actively constructs (or reconstructs) the original meaning of the speaker employing new input as clues. In this reconstruction process, the listener employs prior knowledge of the context and situation within which the listening occurs to understand what he/she hears. Context and situation involve such things as knowledge of the topic at hand, the speaker or speakers, and their correlation with the situation, as well as with each other and previous events. We must realize if the incoming information the listener hears is unfamiliar to him, it can not evoke his schemata and he can only depend heavily on his linguistic knowledge in listening comprehension. Besides, although the listener can trigger a schema, he might not have the suitable schema expected by the speaker. Thus, only relying on top-down processing may result in the failure of comprehension.

1.2.3 *The interactive process* (the third type) overcomes the disadvantages of bottom-up processing and top-down processing to augment the comprehension. In the early 1980s (Rubin, 1994; Carrell and Eisterhold,1983), it was the tendency that only top-down processing was acknowledged to improve L2 (second language) listening comprehension. However it is now more generally accepted that both top-down and bottom-up listening processing should be combined to enhance Listening Comprehension. Complex and simultaneous processing of background knowledge information, contextual information and linguistic information make comprehension and interpretation become easy. When the content of the material is familiar to the listener, he/she will employ his/her background knowledge at the same time to make predictions which will be proved by the new input. As opposed with this, if the listener is unfamiliar with the content of the listening text and deficient in language proficiency, he/she can only depend on his/her linguistic knowledge, especially the lexical and syntactical knowledge to make sense of the information.

1.3 Comprehension

From the cognitive perspective, Anderson (1983, 1985) considers that comprehension consists of perception, parsing and utilization. This next section briefly looks into these three concepts.

1.3.1 Perceptual processing is the encoding of the acoustic or written message (Anderson, 1995). In listening, this covers chunking phonemes from the continuous speech stream. During this stage, an individual pays close attention to input and the sounds are stored in echoic memory. While the input is still in echoic memory, some initial analysis of the language code may start, and encoding

processes may transform some of the input into meaningful representations (Anderson, 1985). It seems probable that the same factors in perceptual processing that attend to auditory material excluding other competing stimuli in the environment also attend selectively to certain key words or phrases that are important in the context, attend to pauses and acoustic emphases that may offer clues to segmentation and to meaning, or attend to contextual elements that may fit with or support the interpretation of meaning such as the listener's goals, expectations about the speaker's purpose, and the type of speech interaction contained (for example, a conversation or a lecture).

1.3.2 In the second Listening Comprehension process— **parsing,** words are converted into a mental representation of the combined meaning of these words. The basic unit of LC is a proposition (Anderson, 1985). Complex propositions may be differentiated into simpler propositions that can be regrouped by the listener to produce new sentences whose basic meaning does not alter.

Therefore, through parsing, a meaning-based representation of the original sequence of words can be stored in short-term memory; this representation is an abstraction of the original word sequences but can be employed to reproduce the original sequences or at least their planned meaning. The size of the unit or segment (or "chunk") of information processed will rely on the learner's knowledge of the language, general knowledge of the topic, and how the information is presented. The main clue for segmentation in Listening Comprehension is meaning, which may be represented syntactically, semantically, phonologically, or by any combination of these.

Second language listeners may have some trouble in understanding spoken language at typical conversational rates by native speakers if they are unfamiliar with the rules for segmentation, even though they may comprehend individual words when hear separately. Findings from research with second language learners show that memory span for target language input is shorter than for native language input (Call, 1985).

Complex input materials may be especially difficult to comprehend in a second language because they need combining of parsed segments in the process of comprehension, thus putting an extra burden on STM (short-term memory) which already may be burdened with unencoded elements of the new input.

1.3.3 The third process, **utilization**, is composed of associating a mental representation of the auditory meaning with existing knowledge. Existing knowledge is retained in long-term memory as propositions or schemata. Connections between the new input meaning and existing knowledge takes place through spreading activation in which knowledge in LTM (long-term memory) is activated so that it is associated with the new meanings in STM (short-term memory).

From all the above, it can be concluded that comprehension occurs when input and knowledge are matched with each other. Perception, parsing and utilization stand for different levels of processing. Of the three levels of processing, perception is the lowest. All three phases are recursive and connected closely, and can occur simultaneously during a single listening event.

Coakley & Wolvin (1986) suggest that listening comprehension in L2 (second language) is the process of receiving, focusing attention on, and assigning meaning to aural stimuli. It includes a listener, who brings prior knowledge of the topic, linguistic knowledge and cognitive processes to the listening task, the aural text, and the interaction between the two.

Fischer and Farris (1995) regard listening comprehension as a process by which students actively form a mental representation of an aural text according to prior knowledge of the topic and information found within.

CHAPTER II

SKILLS OF LISTENING COMPREHENSION

In order to listen effectively we have to be able to hear what the other person is saying. This is important because we have taken the time to actively listen. If we want our listening skills to get stronger it is important that we not day dream in a conversation but instead concentrate fully on what the other person is saying. This chapter looks into listening skills, what a skill is and the classification of listening skills; also in this chapter, the role these play during the process of listening.

2.1   LISTENING SKILLS CONCEPT

A listening skill is a behavior, which, if carried out as part of a strategy, will most probably result in the listener perceiving with fair approximation of accuracy an aural message (Wolvin, 1993).

2.2 CLASIFICATION OF LISTENING SKILLS

McDonough and Shaw (1993) claim that listening skills should be discussed under two related headings:

1. **Processing sound:**

   - To segment the stream of sounds and recognize word boundaries;

   - To recognize sentence and clause boundaries in speech;

   - To recognize significance of language-related features, most obviously intonation;

   - To recognize changes in pitch, tone and speed of delivery.

2. **Processing meaning:**

- To organize the incoming speech into meaningful sections;

- To identify redundant material;

- To use language data to anticipate what speakers are going to say;

- To store information in memory and know how to retrieve it later, by organizing meaning as efficiently as possible and avoiding too much attention to immediate detail.

Voss (1984), Shohamy and Inbar (1991) propose two kinds of skills: top-down processing skills and bottom-up processing skills according to listening processes involving top-down processing and bottom-up processing. H. Byrnes (1984), on the other hand, points out that Listening Comprehension can be divided into a set of distinct sub-skills. Two of these skills are considered by Rivers (1971) as the recognition of component parts of the language (words, verb groups, simple phrases) and memory for these elements as soon as they have been recognized. Recognizing linguistic elements, while fundamental to the process, is not enough for understanding what is heard fully. Listeners must be able to hold these elements in STM (short term memory) long enough to interpret the utterance to which they are attending.

As it can be seen, listening comprises a number of skills. Different lists (Rixon (1984), Richard (1983)) have been suggested, and most of them include the following:

- Hearing the words a speaker says

- Understanding the plain sense of the information a speaker gives

- Deducing the meaning of unknown words and phrases by using the context

- Understanding what is implied but not stated in so many words

- Predicting what the speaker will say

- Identifying important information

- Recognizing the degree of formality with which the speaker talks

- Recognizing rephrasing

- Recognizing grammatical errors

Rixon (1984), classifies the skills (see Figure 2) according to the traditional idea of different levels of linguistic operation:

Global Message *Level 1*	* Understanding the focus and the organization of what the speaker is saying * Making inferences * Combinig the sense of all the separate pieces of information in the text, so as to understand the whole message
Gammar and Vocabulary *Level 2*	* Understanding the meaning of individual pieces of information in the text * Understanding the meaning of particular grammatical structures in the text * Understanding the meaning of the vocabulary used in the text
Sound System *Level 3*	*Recognizing the words used by the speaker * Distinguishing and recognizing sounds correctly

Figure 2. Components of a successful listening performance (From Rixon, 1984, p. 136)

The use of effective listening skills can help students capitalize on the language input they are receiving and help teachers facilitate the teaching process.

Richard (1983) was one of the first to consider the nature of the sub-skills required in different listening situations. He provided 33 micro-skills for conventional listening and a further 18 for academic listening to lectures.

Richard's analysis has been extremely persuasive in aiding language teachers to differentiate and prioritize the components of different types of listening. His micro-skill taxonomies were reshaped and developed by Rost (1990) who pinpointed the division of listening into perception, interpretation and response.

2.3 Listening Micro-skills

Richards (1983, cited in Omaggio, 1983, p. 126) proposes that the following are the micro-skills involved in understanding what someone says to us. The listener has to:

- Retain chunks of language in short-term memory

- Discriminate among the distinctive sounds in the new language

- Recognize reduced forms of words

- Recognize stress and rhythm patterns, tone patterns, intonational contours.

- Distinguish word boundaries

- Recognize vocabulary

- Detect key words, such as those identifying topics and ideas

- Guess meaning from context

- Recognize grammatical word classes

- Recognize basic syntactic patterns

- Recognize cohesive devices

- Detect sentence constituents, such as subject, verb, object, prepositions, etc.

2.4 Listening Sub-skills

Listening is an umbrella term (The Magazine of Vietnam's English Teacher and Trainer Network, 2004) because it covers various different sub-skills:

Prediction

Guessing ahead what students are going to listen to will help have a better understanding of the listening text. This can be done with open prediction, thinking about the story based on its title, or a series of T/F statements which can give an idea of what the text is about. This skill is practiced in pre-listening stage.

Extracting specific information

The recognition of isolated words, for example, when you listen for dates in a personal history, or for numbers or any other small but significant detail in a listening text.

Getting the gist

Having a general understanding of the text. E.g. when you want to know what a speech or a lecture is mainly about.

Extracting detailed information

This will help students gain a deeper understanding of the text or speaker's attitudes and feeling. Here you have to understand every detail and their relationship. E.g. when you have to listen to a recipe or instructions.

Guessing meaning from content

E.g. unfamiliar words from the contextual background and scenario can be guessed at. This is a skill we do in our own language too.

CHAPTER III.

INSUFFICIENCIES OF THE STUDENTS

In a word, the better at listening you are, the more productive you will be in your career and more opportunities will come. Those who are most skilled at listening are able to better understand work they have been given, as well as what is expected of them. Those who are unable to listen well, on the other hand, are more likely to fail when they are given an assignment, or to turn in work that is of much lower quality than is expected. This chapter includes some of the problems students have while they are listening and factors affecting comprehension.

3.1 Factors affecting Listening Comprehension Listening

Listening is sometimes easy and sometimes difficult. Although most authors would agree that assessing the level of difficulty of a given listening text is an exceedingly complicated task, it is possible to roughly relate the level of difficulty to certain factors. Anderson and Lynch (1988) cite the following factors as affecting the complexity of texts:

a) **The way in which the information is organized:** According to the results of experiments carried out by these authors, an oral text will be easier to understand when the information is expressed in a chronological sequence.

b) **The listener's familiarity with the topic:** In general, the listener will understand a text better if he is familiar with the topic. Sometimes, however, a text will be misinterpreted as a result of inappropriate application of background knowledge.

c) **Explicitness of information:** A text containing not only the necessary information, but also redundant facts will be easier to process than one, which is straightforward. For example, when a text which was originally intended to be read is listened to, the listener generally will find it more difficult to understand. This fact has important methodological implications: Sometimes teachers edit materials which sound "disorderly" but they do not realize that by doing this, they demand a more concentrated effort in listening from the students. On the other hand, since interpreters will be required as part of their job to interpret written texts read aloud, interpretation students should be given practice in listening to this kind of material. Equally important is the amount of inferential work that the listener is required to do. Thus, texts containing all the relevant information and no more –and therefore requiring no inference on the part of the listener- are more easily processed by the listener than those in which he has to do interpretative work of his own.

In addition to the factors mentioned above, a text will be more or less difficult to understand depending on the accent of the speaker, the speed of the delivery and the clarity of expression or lack of it. Thus, a fast delivery, for example, will pose greater difficulty to the listener since he will have less time to process each piece of

information. Likewise, an unfamiliar accent will be likely to cause trouble to the non-native listener.

In the light of these facts, it is important for teachers to come to common sense decisions about the type of listening materials to be employed in their lessons. It is a good idea to give the students practice not only with listening texts at slow delivery, but also with texts in which the speaker goes rather fast. Equally important is the idea of exposing learners to as many different accents as possible. Students of interpretation who are likely to come into contact with people who use English to communicate but who have different linguistic backgrounds with specially benefit from such practice.

d) **Type of input:** Spoken texts have been divided by Brown and Yule (1983) into three types: *static, dynamic* and *abstract.* In a static text, the relations between the items are likely to be fixed. This text type will be usually rather easy to follow. A dynamic text on the other hand, will generally include shifts of scene and time. This may make it more difficult to understand. Finally, abstract texts, which express someone's ideas and beliefs, are likely to pose most difficulty to the listener.

3.2. The Listener

Language usually expresses culture. Foreign language students lack socio-cultural, factual and contextual knowledge of the target language to augment comprehension, and are unfamiliar with clichés and collocations in English to predict a missing word or

phrase (Murphy, 1997). It is boring for them to focus on listening to unfamiliar sounds, words and sentences for long periods. To solve these problems, there are some suggestions below (Ur, 1984):

1.   Offer background knowledge and linguistic knowledge, such as complex sentence structures and colloquial words and expressions, as needed. Require the students to learn to make use of context and title to augment comprehension.

2.   Assist students to cultivate the skill of listening with anticipation, listening for specific information, listening for gist, interpretation and inference, listening for intended meaning, listening for attitude, etc., by affording various tasks and exercises at different levels with different intents.

3.   Provide and try to gain as much feedback as possible. During the course, the teacher fills the gap between input and students' reply and between the teacher's feedback and students' reaction so as to make listening purposeful. This not only promotes error correction but gives encouragement as well. It can aid students to heighten their confidence in their ability to tackle listening problems. Students' feedback can assist the teacher to judge where the class is going and how it should be instructed.

4.   Improve memory methods. As for the problem of improving English listening, many listeners only one side of listening more and practicing more, whereas they don't pay enough attention to another side of improving listening methods such as improving the effect of STM. One of the important reasons why many listeners' listening level still remains at the original level is

the inappropriate memory method. After listening level is converted from low stage to high stage, the listener should adjust his/her thinking style an memory model in listening properly, be good at finding out various note-taking styles that are helpful to brain memory according to his/her own actual condition and learn how to associate STM with LTM scientifically.

3.3 Relationships between Listening and Speaking

Students often complain that listening and speaking are their vulnerable spots, and speaking is even weaker (Ur, 1984). It seems that language teaching should begin with the purpose to improve students' spoken proficiency. However, this is not the case, because language comprehension is prior to language production.

When speaking a language, a learner can control a relatively narrow range of vocabulary at his or her own pace to express an idea, but when listening to the response he or she no longer handles the choice of vocabulary. One must be ready to absorb those words which are a part of the speaker's active vocabulary and must adapt to the speaker's rate of speech (Winitz, 1981). In order to manipulate a simple conversation, an individual must possess a much broader competency in listening comprehension than in speaking; this is especially true when talking in a foreign language with a native speaker of that language. According to the range of lexicon and structure, the comparable capabilities might be shown by the areas of two concentric circles in the following Figure:
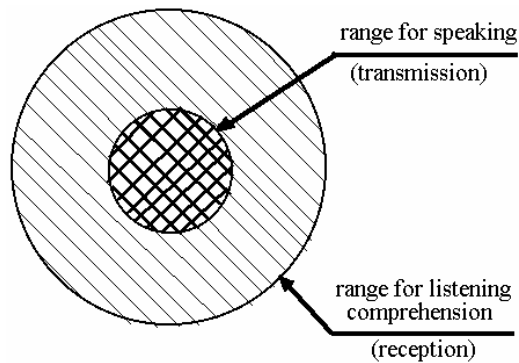
Figure 3 Normal range of receptive and expressive language ability
Note: Cited from Harris Winitz, 1981, p. -251.

What is more, as a learner's language skill improves, we can observe both concentric circles enlarging at the same time with the outer (listening comprehension) circle always embracing a far greater range than the inner (speaking) circle. Stressing the inner circle (speaking) severely hinders the expansion of the outer circle (listening comprehension). Emphasis on aural comprehension training and relaxation of the requirement for oral production in the initial phase of instruction prompt development of linguistic competence and cause better results than those gained through intensive oral practice. Postovsky (1974) contended that decoding language input requires recognition knowledge while encoding language input requires retrieval knowledge retained in LTM. When one understands a sentence, he will retain linguistic knowledge in his STM for a short period of time until it is further processed and corresponds to the knowledge retained in his LTM. If he has not enough accumulation in recognition knowledge, it will not be easy for him to extract knowledge retained in LTM and make use of it. In the natural listening process, the development of recognition knowledge is prior to the development of retrieval knowledge. Delay of

oral practice in the early stages of language learning is an important factor in reducing task overload and proficiency in listening comprehension is easily transferable to other language skills (including speaking and reading). English teachers should not underestimate the process of accumulation of recognition knowledge and spare no efforts to create as many opportunities as possible for students to take in a wealth of language materials before they can speak the target language fluently. Students also need to realize the importance of this process and are prepared to accumulate as much knowledge input as possible through listening. Step by step, speaking will emerge with the lapse of time.

Speaking and listening are complementary. A student can't be expected to produce "i+1" output without learning first about the "+1" element, that is to say, without taking in some sort of "i+1" input. On the other hand, comprehensible input in itself may not result in language development, since, as we have seen, only the pressure to actively make use of the new material (the "+1" part) in their output will compel the students to consciously analyze the linguistic forms the message includes. We should realize the interrelated nature of input and output, especially because a student's comprehensible output may very often become comprehensible input for others.

3.4 Spoken Language affecting Listening Process

A number of special characteristics of spoken language need to be taken into consideration in the process of listening comprehension. Second language learners need to pay attention to such factors because they strongly influence the processing

of speech, and can even block comprehension if they are not attended to. In other words, they can make the listening process difficult. The following eight characteristics of spoken language are adapted from several sources (Dunkel,1991; Flowerdew &Miller, 2005; Richards, 1983; Ur, 1984).

3.4.1 Clustering. In written language we are conditioned to attend to the sentence as the basic unit of organization. In spoken language, due to memory limitations and our predisposition for "chunking," or clustering, we break down speech into smaller groups of words. Clauses are common constituents, but phrases within clauses are even more easily retained for comprehension. in teaching listening comprehension, therefore, teacher need to help students to pick out manageable clusters of words; sometimes second language learners will try to retain overly long constituents (a whole sentence or even several sentences), or they will err in the other direction in trying to attend to every word in an utterance.

3.4.2. Redundancy. Spoken language, unlike most written language, has a good deal of redundancy. Such redundancy helps the hearer to process meaning by offering more time and extra information. Learners can train themselves to profit from such redundancy by first becoming aware that not every new sentence or phrase will necessarily contain new information and by looking for the signals of redundancy. Learners might initially get confused by this, but with some training, students can learn to take advantage of redundancies as well as other markers that provide more processing time.

3.4.3 Reduced forms. While spoken language does indeed contain a good deal of redundancy, it also has many reduced forms and sentence fragments. Reduction can be phonological, morphological, syntactic, or pragmatic. These reductions pose significant difficulties, especially for classroom learners who may have initially been exposed to the full forms of the English language.

3.4.4 Performance variables. In spoken language, except for planned discourse (speeches, lectures, etc.), hesitations, false starts, pauses, and corrections are common. Native listeners are conditioned from very young ages to weed out such performance variables, whereas they can easily interface with comprehension in second language learners.

Every day casual speech by native speakers also commonly contains ungrammatical forms. Some of these forms are simple performance slips. Other ungrammaticality arises out of dialect differences that second language learners are likely to hear sooner or later.

3.4.5 Colloquial language. Learners who have been exposed to standard written English and/or "textbook" language sometimes find it surprising and difficult to deal with colloquial language. Idioms, slang, reduced forms, and shared cultural knowledge are all manifested at some point in conversations. Colloquialisms appear in both monologues and dialogues. Contractions and other assimilations often pose difficult for the learner of English.

3.4.6 Rate of Delivery. Virtually every language learner initially thinks that native speakers speak too fast. Actually, as Richards (1983) points out, the number and

length of pauses used by a speaker are more crucial to comprehension than sheer speed. Learners will nevertheless eventually need to be able to comprehend language delivered at varying rates of speech and, at times, delivered with few pauses. Unlike reading, where a person can stop and go back to reread, in listening the hearer may not always have the opportunity to stop the speaker. Instead, the stream of speech will continue to flow!

3.4.7 Stress, rhythm, and intonation. The prosodic features of the English language are very important for comprehension. Because English is a stress-timed language, English speech can be a terror for some learners as mouthfuls of syllables come spilling out between stress points. Also, intonation patterns are very significant not just for interpreting straightforward elements such as questions, statements, and emphasis but understanding more subtle messages like sarcasm, endearment, insult, solicitation, praise, etc.

3.4.8 Intonation. Unless a language learner's objective is exclusively to master some specialized skill like monitoring radio broadcasts or attending lectures, interaction will play a large role in listening comprehension. conversation is especially subject to all the rules of interaction; negotiation, clarification; attending signals; turn-taking; and topic nomination, maintenance, and termination. So; to learn to listen is also to learn to respond and to continue a chain of listening and responding. Classroom techniques that include listening components must at some point include instructions in the two-way nature of listening. Students need to understand that good listeners (in conversation) are good responders. They know hoe to negotiate meaning (to give

feedback, to ask for clarification, to maintain a topic) so that the process of comprehending can be complete rather than be aborted by insufficient interaction.

CHAPTER IV.

Learning and Teaching Listening

This chapter covers some important definitions such as learning, acquisition and teaching. According to these definitions and authors' points of view there are differences which are important to mention. The learning process is a crucial one because of the student's objectives, in this process the student needs help, direct instruction in the rules of language, new information to integrate to the conscious knowledge. On the other hand, this learning process goes on without any teaching, and some of it outside the conscious awareness of the learner. In addition, this part of the work lists a number of principles that help to create techniques and activities for listening comprehension which can be practiced through the learning process.

4.1 Learning and Acquisition

4.1.1 Learning is often defined as a change in behavior (Birkenholz, 1999), which is demonstrated by people implementing knowledge, skills, or practices derived from education.

Basically, from an educator's perspective, **learning** involves helping people along the learning process, and learning includes all of the things that we do to make it happen. As an end result, we know that learning occurs when people take newfound information and incorporate it into their life. For example, if we are working with an audience that lacks basic financial management skills for budgeting, one of our

objectives is to see people gain knowledge in this area and to actually implement the new skills – hopefully, over a long period of time.

4.1.2 Language acquisition

Acquisition, on the other hand, is the process by which humans acquire the capacity to perceive, produce and use words to understand and communicate. This capacity involves the picking up of diverse capacities including syntax, phonetics, and an extensive vocabulary. This language might be vocal as with speech or manual as in sign. Language acquisition usually refers to first language acquisition, which studies infants' acquisition of their native language, rather than *second language acquisition* that deals with acquisition in both children and adults of additional languages. A major concern in understanding language acquisition is how these capacities are picked up by infants from what appears to be very little input. A range of theories of language acquisition has been created in order to explain this apparent problem including innatism in which a child is born prepared in some manner with these capacities, as opposes to the other theories in which language is simply learned.

The process of language "acquisition" in the child was viewed by some theorists as a biological process of growth and maturation rather than as one of social learning (through experience, environmental influence) or deliberate teaching (Stern, 1983).

4.2 Language acquisition vs. language learning

There is an important distinction between language acquisition and language learning. Children acquire language through a subconscious process during which

they are unaware of grammatical rules. This is similar to the way they acquire their first language. They get a feel for what is and what is not correct. In order to acquire language, the learner needs a source of natural communication. The emphasis is on the text of the communication and not on the form. Young students who are in the process of acquiring English get plenty on the job practice. They readily acquire the language to communicate with classmates.

Language learning, on the other hand, is not communicative. It is the result of direct instruction in the rules of language. And it certainly is not an age-appropriate activity for your young learners. In language learning, students have conscious knowledge of the new language and can talk about that knowledge. They can fill in the blanks on a grammar page or complete a conversation. However, knowing grammar rules does not necessarily result in good speaking or writing. A student who has memorized the rules of the language may be able to succeed on a standardized test of English language but may not be able to speak, write or listen correctly.

4.3 Learning and Teaching Listening

The concept of learning has been greatly influenced by the psychological study of the learning process, and as a result it is much more widely interpreted than has been customary in popular uses of the term (Stern, 1983). The psychological concept of learning goes far beyond learning directly from a teacher or learning through study or practice. It includes not only the learning of skills or the acquisition of knowledge. It refers also to learning to learn and learning to think; the modification of attitudes; the

acquisition of interests, social values, or social roles, end even changes in personality (idem).

Language learning, in keeping with this broad interpretation, is also very widely conceived. It includes all kinds of language learning for which no formal provision is made through teaching. An individual in his life time, without any specific tuition, acquires new terms, meanings, slangs, codes, or registers, may learn new patterns of intonation, new gestures, may learn to function in more than one language. Much, and perhaps even most, of such language learning goes on without any "teaching", and some of it outside the conscious awareness of the learner. It has been observed that much second language learning "takes places… by relatively informal, unplanned imitation and use in actual communication situations" (Ferguson, 1962, p.19).

4.4 Principles for teaching listening skills

Several decades of research and practice in teaching listening comprehension have yielded some practical principles for designing classroom aural comprehension techniques. Some of them, actually apply to any technique, the others are more germane to listening. Brown (2007, pp.310-312) lists a number of principles that help to create techniques and activities for listening comprehension.

4.4.1 **Include a focus on listening in an integrated-skills course.** Assuming that your curriculum is dedicated to the integration of all your skills, remember that each of the separate skills deserves special focus in appropriate doses. It is easy to adopt a philosophy of just letting students "experience" language without careful attention to component skills.

Because aural comprehension itself cannot be overtly "observed", teachers sometimes incorrectly assume that the input provided in the classroom will always be converted into intake. The creation of effective listening techniques requires studied attention to all the principles of listening.

4.4.2 **Use techniques that are intrinsically motivating.** Appeal to listener's personal interests and goals. Since background information (schema) is an important factor in listening, take into full account the experiences, goals, and abilities of the students when teacher designs lessons. It is important to remember that the cultural background(s) of the students can be both facilitating and interfering in the process of listening. Then, once a technique is launched, try to construct it in such a way that students are caught up in the feel self-propelled toward its final objective.

4.4.3 **Utilize authentic language and contexts.** Authentic language and real-world tasks enable students to see the relevance of classroom activity to their long-term communicative goals. If a teacher introduces a natural texts rather than concocted, artificial material, students will be more readily dive into the activity.

4.4.4 **Carefully consider the form of listener's responses.** Comprehension itself is not externally observable. Teachers cannot peer into a learner's brain through a little window and empirically observe what is stored there after someone else has said something. Teachers can only infer that certain things have been comprehended through student's overt (verbal or

nonverbal) responses to speech. It is therefore important for teachers to design techniques in such a way that student's responses indicate whether or not their comprehension has been correct. Lund (1990) offered nine different ways that teachers can check listener's comprehension:

- **Doing –**the listener responds physically to a command

- **Choosing-** the listener selects from alternatives such as pictures, objects, and texts.

- **Transferring-**the listener draws a picture of what is heard

- **Answering-** the listener answers questions about the message

- **Condensing-**the listener outlines or takes notes on a lecture

- **Extending-**the listener provides and ending to a story heard

- **Duplicating-** the listener translates the message into the native language or repeats in verbatim

- **Modeling-** the listener orders a meal, for example, after listening to a model order.

- **Conversing-** the listener engages in a conversation that indicates appropriate processing of information.

4.4.5 Encourage the development of listening strategies. Most foreign language students are simply not aware of how to listen. One of teacher's

jobs is to equip them with listening strategies that extend beyond the classroom. Draw the attention to the value of such strategies as:

- Looking for key words

- Looking for nonverbal cues to meaning

- Predicting a speaker's purpose by the context of the spoken discourse

- Associating information with one's existing cognitive structure (activating background information)

- Guessing at meanings

- Seeking clarification

- Listening for the general gist

- Various test-taking strategies for listening comprehension

As a teacher "teaches learners how to learn" by helping them to develop their overall strategic competence, strategies for effective listening can become a highly significant part of their chances for successful learning (Brown, 2007).

4.4.6 Include both bottom-up and top-down techniques. Speech-processing theory distinguishes between two types of processing in both listening and reading comprehension. Bottom-up processing proceeds from sounds to towards to grammatical relationships to lexical meanings, etc., to a final "message." Top-down processing is evoked from "a bank of prior knowledge and global expectations" (Morley, 1991a, p. 87) and other

background information (schemata) that the listener brings to the text. Bottom-up techniques typically focus on sounds, words, intonation, grammatical structures, and other components of spoken language. Top-down techniques are more concerned with the activation of schemata, with deriving meaning, with global understanding, and with the interpretation of a text. It is important for learners to operate from both directions since both can offer keys to determining the meaning of spoken discourse.

CHAPTER V.

Listening Comprehension Strategies

The previous chapters have looked at the nature and process of listening comprehension, what comprehension is and the classification of listening skills. In addition some factors affecting this process and relationship between listening and speaking. So far, we have looked at some important concepts and differences between learning, teaching and acquisition and principles for teaching listening skills.

This chapter presents some listening comprehension strategies and how these are applied in the listening process viewed as a cyclical approach. It gives different options to better develop each step of this process using different skills and strategies during the pre-listening, tasks-listening and post-listening.

5.1 Listening Comprehension Strategies

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) have validated a body of language learning strategies and developed and accompanying classification scheme grounded in cognitive theory. This scheme categorizes strategies as being either cognitive or metacognitive in nature. Metacognitive strategies refer to what learners do to oversee, regulate or direct their learning and include planning, monitoring and evaluating stages which mirror the pre-task, on-task and post-task activities featured in many texts. Cognitive strategies, on the other hand, refer to strategies used to manipulate their input or material to apply a specific skill or strategy to a particular task. A third category, socio-affective strategies, refers to learning that takes place during cooperative interaction

with classmates, questions addressed to the teacher, or techniques for the reduction of anxiety.

While second language strategy research has generated an enormous amount of interest in recent years, the number of studies devoted specifically to listening comprehension remains small, and the number of studies which investigate the use of strategies in listening is even more limited (Rubin, 1994). Nevertheless, recent studies on the differences in strategy use between relatively more and less effective listeners underline the potential metacognitive strategies posses for enhancing second language listening. (cf. O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Vandergrift, 1997).

Furthermore, the limited number of studies so far in listening strategy instruction suggests that learners can be instructed in strategy use, and that doing so enhances their performance on listening tasks. (cf. O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Rubin, 1988; Thompson and Rubin, 1996). Although this research based is limited, preliminary evidence suggests that the use of metacognitive strategies helped students manage their learning effectively, and thus capitalize on the input they receive to improve their task performance.

5.2 Development of Metacognitive Awareness

In adittion to the preliminary evidence on strategy instruction presented above (cf. O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Vandergrift, 1997)., research has indicated the potential metacognition holds for developing what might be termed a "meta-strategic" awareness among learners, in a nutshell a "what could/should I do instead?" approach to listening comprehension. Such an approach would combine

metacognitive awareness of the available options and self-regulation strategies with cognitive strategies for interpreting and manipulating linguistic input to increase comprehension.

Means of introducing such an approach to learners are varied. At the introductory level, a presentation of strategies, their role in language comprehension and a survey of the skills students employ is suggested (Holden, 2001). Another means that has been suggested is to give the students a text of listening passage in a language other than English and discuss the means available to them for interpreting it. Such an approach can increase awareness of the features and cues available for deriving meaning from a test or listening passage, and promotes the strategy of selective attention (Mendelsohn, 1994).

5.3 The Listening Process: A Cyclical Approach

The sequence of listening tasks into pre-listening, tasks-listening and post-listening sections has been a mainstay in the teaching of listening comprehension for the better part of the two decades (Borkowski et. al., 1990). Such an orientation is pedagogically sound, and, in so far as it serves to direct learners toward a consistent approach to planning, monitoring and evaluating their comprehension, highly advisable. However, it falls short of being and adequate approach to the development of actual listening strategies: all too often the cognitive aspects of the process submitted under these categories are underplayed on inconsistently presented. If listening tasks are designed in such as way as (or the instructor is able post-hoc) to "strongly encourage" learners to make consistent use of particular strategies at

appropriate points in the listening process in order to comprehend the input, and this approach is used systematically, learners would in the end stand a far greater chance of improving their listening ability.

5.3.1 Pre- Listening

The pre-listening component should include activities that prepare learners for what they will hear, what they will do, and how the task can be approached. Initially students need to make conscious any knowledge they have of the content, background, setting, participants and goals or purposes of the exchange they will hear, and the vocabulary likely to be used in that setting or situation. Next, a purpose for listening must be established: what information is required, and in how much detailed. Finally, ways in which the task might be approached can be presented and weighed before listening begins.

Pre-listening activities help students make decisions about what to listen for and where to focus their attention while listening, while encouraging them to bring existing cultural, linguistic and personal knowledge to bear on the task. A checklist of strategies learners can employ illustrates some of the strategies that might be used in the pre-listening component (Vandergrift, 1999, 2002).

1) **Use visual or Environmental Clues**

   Strategies: activate background knowledge, infer, predict, selectively attend, provide context, associate.

2) **Brainstorm words and phrases you might hear**

Strategies: direct attention, predict, activate background knowledge, selectively attend, infer, and associate.

3) **Focus on Vocabulary**

Strategies: scan, selectively attend, infer, evaluate, activate background knowledge, group, contextualize.

4) **Think of a Synonym (or antonym)**

Strategies: activate background knowledge, plan and organized, use the language, infer, contextualize, predict, cooperate, send and receive information, repeat and practice.

5) **Personalize the information**

Strategies: selectively attend, activate background knowledge, contextualize, and personalize.

6) **Think ahead**

Strategies: activate background knowledge, contextualize, predict, use mental imagery, and use the language.

7) **Relate the situation to your own experience**

Strategies: use mental imagery, contextualize, personalize and use the language.

8) **Use your information**

Strategies: use mental imagery, contextualize, personalize and use the language.

9) **Use Textual Clues**

Strategies: set goals, organize and plan, predict, self management and talk through

10) Identify the purpose

    a) Strategies: set goals, organize and plan, self management, selective attention.

    b) Specific Goal: ID

    Strategies: set goals, organize and plan, self management, pay selectively attention, focus on key words.

11) Use imagination

    Strategies: use mental imagery, contextualize, personalize and use the language.

5.3.2 Tasks-listening

During the listening activity itself, students should be encouraged to monitor their level of comprehension and make decisions about appropriate strategy use. Students need to continuously and consistently monitor their level of comprehension and to match the input they receive with the predictions they made in the pre-listening activities, and for internal consistency with the input they are receiving. This is a highly complex task, made all the more difficult because teacher invention is virtually impossible in this stage. Thus, consistent and systematic training in the use of strategies appropriate to particular tasks and extensive pre-listening activities need to be incorporated into any program of listening instruction. Explicating and rehearsing these skills before students begin listening may be advisable, on the other hand, demonstrating afterwards that students could have understood more by having employed the strategies may have more impact, and convince more students to make use of them (Vandergrift, 1999, 2002).

1) **Ask yourself questions**

   Strategies: Self monitors, clarification, direct attention, verify predictions, ask questions and predict.

2) **Use grammar as a guide**

   Strategies: activate grammar knowledge, predict, direct attention, selectively attend, deduce, group and classify, use linguistic clues and analyze expressions.

3) **Listen for group of words**

   Strategies: activate background knowledge, predict, direct attention, selectively attend, group, infer, deduce, analyze expressions and use linguistic clues.

4) **Control the input**

   Strategies: direct attention, selectively attend, self monitor, ask questions, and confirm understanding, self management and conversational management.

5) **Listen for emphasis/stress**

   Strategies: direct attention, selectively attend, use grammar as a guide, deduce, repeat, and recognize formula or pattern.

6) **Listen for the intonation pattern**

   Strategies: activate background knowledge, direct attention, predict, selectively attend, infer, use grammar as a guide, repeat, and recognize formula or pattern.

7) **Re-confirm your purpose**

   Strategies: direct attention, activate background knowledge, selectively attend, infer, monitor, repeat, compare and contrast.

8) **Think ahead**

Strategies: direct attention, activate background knowledge, predict, infer, deduce, monitor and confirm.

9) Substitute

Strategies: direct attention, activate background knowledge, selectively attend, monitor, deduce, problem solving, use grammar as a guide.

Identify signaling phrases and discourse markers used to show the end of the speaking turn or shifts in topic. Strategies: direct attention, predict, infer, analyze phrases, and recognize formulas and patterns.

10) Shadow

Strategies: direct attention, selectively attend, remember information, repeat, use the language, monitor.

11) Take notes

Strategies: direct attention, selectively attend, remembering information, highlight, summarize and evaluate.

12) Confirm and clarify your understanding

Strategies: ask questions, remember information, problem solving, use the language, evaluate and monitor.

5.3.3 Post-listening

Post- listening activities provide an opportunity for learners to evaluate their level of comprehension, compare and discuss strategies and reflect on alternative approaches to the task. Pair, small groups or class discussion, in the students' first language where necessary, are the simplest way to encourage this. More important than getting "right answer" is how the answer was obtained, and this knowledge can

become part of the students' skills repertoire and applied to successive tasks and in other contexts. The connection between pre-listening and post-listening also needs to be made explicit, so that learner can develop the ability to better prepare for and predict what they will encounter by broadening the range of strategies they employ. Performance checklists or listening protocols can provide a good starting point for discussions. Such approaches encourage students to reflect on the steps taken (or not taken) at various points in the listening activity by themselves and their peers, and enable them to see which strategies they (and others) employ most frequently, and which they tend to neglect. Discussing their approach with classmates whose approaches to listening differ should help students adjust their strategies and broaden their skills repertoire. In the process of doing so, and applying what they have learned from their peers, learners should gain access to more language, making content more comprehensible. Some post-listening strategies should employ include (Vandergrift, 1999, 2002):

1) **Confirm your predictions**

   Strategies: ask questions, remember information, evaluate, monitor, predict, compare and contrast and ask information.

2) **Paraphrase**

   Strategies: remember information, use the language, highlight, summarize, evaluate and monitor.

3) **Assess your Success**

   Strategies: selectively attend, evaluate, monitor, verify and record.

4) **Note down what you remember**

Strategies: Direct attention, selectively attend, remember information, and use the language, monitor and record.

5) **Read and check**

Strategies: use the language, confirm, compare, evaluate, monitor, and remember information.

6) **Listen and Read**

Strategies: direct attention, selectively attend, remember information, use the language, evaluate, monitor and record.

7) **Listen, Read and Repeat**

Strategies: direct attention, selectively attend, imitate, remember information, use the language, monitor and evaluate.

8) **Organize and record new vocabulary**

Strategies: take notes, selectively attend, and remember information and record.

9) **Evaluate the success of your strategies**

Strategies: selectively attend, remember information, use the language, monitor, evaluate and record.

10) **Evaluate your learning**

Strategies: self management, selectively attend, remember information, use the language, evaluate, monitor and record.

11) **Use the vocabulary**

Strategies: remember information, use the language, summarize and transfer.

12) **Confirm and clarify your understanding**

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Strategies: ask questions, remember information, problem solving, use the language, evaluate and monitor.

By adopting a cyclical approach to listening in which pre-listening, on-task listening and post-listening activities, each of which in turn incorporate appropriate, viable complementary strategies, we are encouraging students to listen to confirm, as well as to comprehend. Such an approach engages the student in the task more deeply, as they have posited something and are listening to confirm predictions, not simply to glean information. Listening should be presented to learners, particularly beginners, as a cyclical rather than as a linear process, as students all too often tend to view it in the latter terms. Interpreted improperly, "could you play the tape again?" might seem to indicate a linear approach; if we present the tape as a loop, it may in fact encourage learners to take a different view of the process of listening. It is facility with the process, not simply the final product that indicates the development of viable skills that will enable comprehension in other settings and situations. An emphasis on listening comprehension which incorporates awareness-raising at the metacognitive level with the application and consistent evaluation of listening strategies at the cognitive level will help learners more successfully capitalize in other areas of language learning.

CHAPTER VI

Facilitating Listening Comprehension

This chapter explains ways in which the uses of cognitive and metacognitive strategies try to organize learning and the interaction with input can improve learner's comprehension of spoken English, and in turn enhances the process of language learning /acquisition. This also illustrates ways in which listeners can use strategies to facilitate the listening process, and how teachers can promote the development and use of these strategies in the classroom.

6.1 Developing Successful Strategies.

Listeners do not pay attention to everything; they listen selectively, according to the purpose of the task (Richards, 1998). This in turn, determines the type of listening required and the way in which listeners will approach a task. Richards (1990) differentiates between an interactional and a transactional purpose for communication. Interactional use of language is socially oriented, existing largely to satisfy the social needs of the participants. Therefore, interactional listening is highly contextualized and two-way, involving interaction with a speaker. A transactional use of language, on the other hand, is more message-oriented and is used primarily to communicate information. In contrast with interactional listening, transactional listening requires accurate comprehension of a message with no opportunity for clarification with a speaker (one-way listening). Knowing the communicative purpose of a text or utterance will help the listener determine what to listen for and, therefore,

which processes to activate. As with the advantages of knowing the context, knowing the purpose for listening also greatly reduces the burden of comprehension since listeners know that they need to listen for something very specific, instead of trying to understand every word.

Teachers can help students develop sound strategies for comprehension through a process approach to teaching second language listening. This helps students learn how to listen and develop the metacognitive knowledge and strategies crucial to success in listening comprehension.

As we mentioned before, listening comprehension has often been as a passive activity. It is, on the contrary, an active process in which the listener must discriminate among sounds, understand words and grammar, interpret intonation and other prosodic clues, and retain information gathered long enough to interpret it in the context or setting in which the exchange takes place. In short is a complex activity which requires substantial mental effort.

Listening Comprehension as a separate component of language learning and instruction came into its own only after long and significant debate regarding its validity. A large volume of research has demonstrated the critical role of input, and particularly "comprehensible input" in language acquisition, (cf. Krashen, 1982); (O'Malley, 1985); Feyten, 1991) underlining the primacy of the role played by listening comprehension in second language teaching.

It has been widely acknowledged for some time that listening comprehension plays a vital role in facilitating language learning. According to Gary (1975), giving pre-

eminence to the development of listening comprehension, particularly in the early stages of language learning (and instruction) provides four main advantages: ***cognitive, efficiency, utility and affective advantages.***

6.1.1 The Cognitive Advantage

The cognitive advantage of an initial emphasis on listening comprehension is that if follows a natural order of acquisition, reflecting the process of first language acquisition. Processing and decoding speech requires recognition knowledge, which are a natural initial step; encoding and producing speech require retrieval knowledge, which can only occur after speech has been comprehend and stored in memory. If we insist that learners place what has not yet been thoroughly assimilated into memory, it will result in cognitive overload, and the information will be soon forgotten. This explains to some extent why learners of limited proficiency have difficulty listening for accurate meaning and learning to produce speech at the same time. Short-term memory is not capable of retaining all of the necessary information and learners consequently rely on native language habits when forced to speak before they have fully comprehend the input. Nor only does placing the emphasis on immediate speech production leave little room for listening, it leaves little room for language comprehension.

6.1.2 The Efficiency Advantage

Related to the cognitive advantage is the efficiency advantage Gary (1975); language learning is more efficient if learners are not required to immediately produce large portions of the language material to which they are exposed. This allows for more

meaningful language use early in the course of instruction, as learners are able to employ the limited resources available in short-term memory to the task of deriving and retaining meaning. Furthermore, emphasizing the development of listening comprehension at the outset of instructions is more efficient because students are exposed to controlled, "comprehensible" input from various sources, rather than from the imperfect utterances of classmates. Recall here that the discussion is limited to the comprehension of language input, not the issue of "ingrained errors" that many instructors erroneously believe to derive from student-student L2 interaction. Controlled listening input in the initial stages of study provides a more realistic and natural model than peer/classmate speech, which mat be poorly pronounced, or require an inordinate amount of class time to comprehend.

6.1.3 The Utility Advantage

The third advantage, the utility advantage, addresses the usefulness of receptive skill. Research has demonstrated that adults spend 40-50% of their communication time engaged in listening, 25%-30 speaking, 10-15% reading and less than 10% writing (Gilman and Moody, 1984, p. 331). It seems logical to conclude from this language learners will make greater use of listening comprehension skills than other language skills. While speakers can use paralinguistics and other means of getting their message across, listeners must adjust to a speaker's rate of speech, accent, and choice of vocabulary. This is perhaps the most salient reason for teaching listening comprehension strategies and provides a rationale for including listening activities throughout a language program, even at more advanced levels.

6.1.4 The Affective or Psychological Advantage

The fourth advantage gained from placing emphasis on listening comprehension is the affective or psychological advantage. Absent the pressure of early speech production, there is potentially less risk of embarrassment to students who are uncertain that they can make themselves understood. When this pressure is eliminated, learners are able to relax and direct their attention to comprehending speech, developing listening skills and internalizing vocabulary and structure that will facilitate the emergence of other language skills. Moreover, focusing on listening in the early stages promotes a sense of accomplishment and success; this is fosters motivation to continue learning (Rubin, 1988).

In short, listening comprehension is a set of highly integrated skills, all of which play an important role in the process of language acquisition and the development of related language skills. Consequently, an awareness and deployment of effective listening comprehension strategies can help learners make the most of the language input to which they are exposed.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Teaching is all about communicating, and communicating includes listening as well as speaking and writing. Effective teachers really work at listening, understanding and responding to their students. Not everyone has good listening skills and this includes teachers. However, there are certain things that can be done to improve.

2. Students have insufficient ability to infer, predict and identify the information when face with an oral text. This will result in insufficient mastery of the foreign language in general and will also have a negative effect on their performance in the listening comprehension process. Possible solutions to this problem include designing and implementing a set of special listening exercises to improve the abilities of inference of the topic, prediction of what the speaker is going to say and identification of relevant from irrelevant information during their training both as EFL students.

3. Foreign languages - in this case English- listening is a complex skill that needs to be developed consciously. It can best be developed with practice when students reflect on the process of listening without the threat of evaluation. Using listening activities to only test comprehension leads to anxiety which debilitates the development of metacognitve strategies. Strategy use positively impacts self-concept, attitudes, about learning and attributional beliefs about personal control (Borkowski et. al., 1990). Guiding students through the process of listening not only provides them with the knowledge by which they

can successfully complete a listening task; it also motivates them and puts them in control of their learning (Vandergrift, 2002).

4. This paper attempted to look into ways for developing and improving the listening comprehension process through some strategies and skills which can be used before, during and after the process of listening, inside the classroom and in real life situations; taking into account some aspects in which students or teachers can be involved. This paper may help both teachers and students with the problems encountered in the process of listening comprehension. For instance, lack of extra linguistic knowledge to failure to guess the meaning of new lexical items and predicting what the speaker is going to say. Additionally this paper gives the opportunity to the student or teacher to monitor what the problem is during the listening process and it may help to reinforce this process by using some strategies and skills according to their specific needs.

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