

Contemporary Practices in the Teaching of Listening

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Listening is the most important of the four language skills. To begin with, listening is the first of the language skills to develop. Babies in the womb can hear, recognize, and react to their mothers' voices. Second, listening is the language skill that is used most often in everyday communication. Morley (1999) informs us that "we listen twice as much as we speak, four times as much as we read, and five times as much as we write" (p. 16). Furthermore, listening comprehension is the foundation upon which the other language skills are acquired (Feyten, 1991). Thus, listening comprehension not only plays a crucial role in first language communication, but it is also "at the heart of L2 [second language] learning" (Vandergrift, 2007, p. 191).

Unfortunately, this essential language skill has often been neglected in the language classroom. Teachers sometimes assume that students are developing their listening skills just because they are listening to the teachers use the target language. Yet listening is a complex process that requires phonological, semantic, syntactical, discourse, and pragmatic knowledge of the language as well as understanding of the context and of nonverbal communication. Learners then have to apply this knowledge in a range of contexts, both unidirectional (e.g., lectures, radio broadcasts) and bidirectional (e.g., classroom discussions, conversations) listening situations, and while using a variety of technologies (e.g., telephones, computers, digital audio players). Given the complexity of the listening comprehension process and the contexts in which it occurs, it cannot be assumed that a learner's listening skill will develop on its own. Teachers must make conscious and systematic efforts to develop this skill in learners. To assist them in this endeavor, *Teaching Listening: Voices From the Field* shares successful practices employed by teachers at different levels of education around the world.

CURRENT TRENDS IN THE TEACHING OF LISTENING

Several trends in listening pedagogy are exemplified by the classroom practices described in this volume. These trends include the continuing integration of listening with other language skills, a growing interest in discourse analysis, and the application of new technologies.

First, there is the integration of the teaching of listening with the teaching of other language skills. Approaches to language teaching commonly used today, such as content-based instruction and task-based instruction, have helped promote this integration. Listening is rarely taught in isolation anymore; it is more often taught in conjunction with speaking, reading, and writing activities, with the aim to promote not only skill acquisition but disciplinary knowledge and social development as well (see Chapters 10, 11, and 13 in this volume).

Discourse analysis and corpus linguistics are influencing language teaching in general and the teaching of listening in particular. Teachers are able to access corpora in order to analyze the discourse of spoken language (e.g., conversations, university lectures) and use their findings to design more authentic listening activities for their classrooms (see Chapter 3). Teachers are also involving students in discourse analysis as a way to improve students' listening comprehension. For example, they are guiding students to notice how a speaker introduces new information, changes from one topic to another, or emphasizes important information. Instead of being told what these discourse features are, students are encouraged to become discourse analysts and discover the information for themselves.

New technologies have probably had the greatest impact on the pedagogy of teaching listening. In the past, listening activities often consisted of students listening and repeating after the teacher or listening to an audiocassette (usually of an artificial dialogue) in the classroom or language lab. However, today's technologies allow teachers to bring a variety of listening text types into the classroom (see Part II) and give students access to these texts at will. For example, teachers in the 1950s or 1960s had no way to use movies as a tool for listening development in the classroom. Later, the advent of VCRs and then DVD players facilitated the use of movies in the classroom. Today, approximately 29% of the world's population uses the Internet (International Telecommunication Union, 2010). With video streaming on the Internet, students can watch a movie whenever they like, wherever they like, and as many times as they like, thus providing more opportunities to promote learner autonomy. Students now have more choice in terms of the kind of materials they listen to, more control over how many times they listen to a text, and, in some cases, even control over the speed of the text.

New technologies also allow students themselves to become the designers of listening materials for others (see Chapter 9). The interactivity of Web 2.0 tools enables students to share their creations not only with their classmates but with people all over the world. Furthermore, the Internet has helped to blur the

distinction between English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) environments (Xu, 2007) by giving teachers and students greater access to authentic listening materials. With access to the Internet, it is now possible for teachers and students in any country to download or stream music, podcasts, and videos in English.

IN THIS VOLUME

Designing Listening Courses

This section contains two chapters that provide tools and processes for designing and evaluating listening materials and listening course curricula.

In Chapter 2, Joseph Dias and Keita Kikuchi report on the changes implemented in an English for academic purposes (EAP) listening course in Japan as a result of two needs analysis studies. Using surveys, interviews, and focus groups, the authors show that their needs analyses have resulted in certain tasks and innovations in the course.

In Chapter 3, Julia Salehzadeh introduces the Michigan Corpus of Academic Speech and discusses its impact on the teaching of listening at the University of Michigan, in the United States. She encourages EAP practitioners to use this collection of academic speech to improve their current classroom practices. Her argument is based on her application of the material in her teaching and usage of a checklist of listening dimensions.

Exploring Listening Texts and Technologies

The chapters in this section describe various ways in which practitioners have used a range of listening text types and the technologies they have used to make these text types accessible to students.

In Chapter 4, Michael Stetson presents eight activities developed from his teaching experience in English language programs in South Korea and Japan. His activities have been designed not only to provide ideas of how to manipulate a text for listening practice, but also to address the emerging role of English as a world language.

In Chapter 5, Patricia Long Davis shares a lesson for adult immigrants that she uses in an intensive English program in the United States, which integrates listening, writing, and speaking skills. Students listen for key points in a telephone message on healthcare and deliver an oral summary, thereby developing their listening skills while learning about community services.

In Chapter 6, Carmella Lieske discusses her listening activities for junior college and university students in Japan. Typically, students in her classes listen to a song, write down words and phrases, and compare word lists among themselves. Students who engaged in this activity expressed higher levels of enjoyment in listening to English music, an enhanced interest in using music to study English

outside of class, a stronger ability to infer meaning and to transfer their learning to other listening situations, and an understanding of the benefits of working in pairs.

Starting Chapter 7 with the opening scene of a movie, Christopher Stillwell asks the reader if it is possible to use a challenging movie for listening material. He argues that, with the right approaches, it is. The listening activities he presents have been developed and adapted in the United States and Japan for ESL and EAP programs. The teaching techniques include a close-up perspective for focus on the story and language, and a wide-angle perspective for general understanding.

In Chapter 8, Jeff Popko describes a reading-while-listening activity that he developed for academic communication and reading courses in an intensive English program at a U.S. university because international graduate students found it difficult to understand lectures and read academic books. In Popko's activity, students choose an audiobook, listen to it while reading the text version of the book, and write responses in their journals.

In Chapter 9, Ashley Hazell Yildirim and Erica Hoffman share a framework for helping students improve their listening skills by exploiting the potential of podcasts. Students taking a preparatory year of English that is required for entrance into Sabanci University, in Turkey, first create listening activities from available podcasts and then create podcasts of their own.

Developing Academic Listening

This section demonstrates successful practices for developing academic listening in elementary, secondary, and university contexts.

In Chapter 10, Nancy Carnevale describes four of her favorite listening activities that she uses to teach culturally diverse fifth graders in the United States. Through these activities, the learners practice listening comprehension, connect listening with academic and content language, and develop word consciousness.

In Chapter 11, Nancy Cloud and Deborah Short, along with secondary-level teachers Kelly Healey, Michael Paul, and Patricia Winiarski, describe three activities that help ESL students in a U.S. secondary school build receptive and expressive communicative skills. Healey's activity fosters active listening in students and helps them organize information. Paul's activity, modeled after TV talk shows, integrates listening and speaking and provides students with opportunities to engage in real discussion. Winiarski's activity encourages students to listen attentively and take meaningful notes.

In Chapter 12, Jim Bame describes how he teaches note taking to EAP students at Utah State University, in the United States. His listening-to-lectures course is divided into two phases, each containing several activities. The first phase focuses on university lectures and note taking, and the second phase focuses on viewing and exploring video clips of lectures from various academic disciplines.

In Chapter 13, Patricia Sackville describes the development of a listening study aid to help engineering students in a postsecondary institution in Canada. The aid involves audio recordings of explanations of key concepts from a course in statics. Sackville highlights the potential for integrating listening development into any disciplinary course and for involving students in the development of learning materials.

The chapters in this volume present activities that manipulate research-based strategies in innovative ways and that have been developed to address the particular listening problems emerging in various contexts. Teachers should find many useful suggestions in this volume. We hope that the presentation of these classroom practices will greatly enrich teachers' repertoire of tools for listening development in the TESOL discipline.

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