

## The Essence of Classroom Technique and Activities in Teaching Listening as A Foundation Skill for Other Skills in The Early Acquisition of Language

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**Abstract.** *This article discusses teaching and learning Listening English, especially teaching and learning Listening to children which play an important role on language acquisition. Listening is always referred to as a boring lesson. Most of students are always feel trouble before trying Listening lessons. This is a challenge for us as English teacher. Here we must make the class become more interactive. Listening is the basis for the development of all other skills and the main channel through which the student makes initial contact with the target language and its culture. On the Interactive class, students not only listen, filling in the blanks, and answer questions, but they also discuss, dialogue, debate in conversation with each other and teachers can also incorporate the game in that classroom learning more fun and interactive. Everyone can participate in the class of Listening in the sense that they can improve their skills in listening, grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and speaking. Teachers assess Listening through the application of appropriate assessment with learning Listening, such as how well they capture the information they hear from the voice or video then they can discuss it together with each other in the classroom (could play, debates, discussions, etc.).*

**Keywords:** *teaching listening, interactive classroom*

### A. INTRODUCTION

English is one of language that widely used in the world. English used in many aspects in our life, such as in economic, business, and education. In education aspect, English is one of subject which studied by the students. As integral part of whole educational process, learning English must be followed by all students. There

are four skills in English must be mastered, they are: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Listening is the natural precursor to speaking; the early stages of language development in a person's first language (and in naturalistic acquisition of other languages) are dependent on listening. As we know, and based on what we see every day that babies as young as one and two months of age have the capacity to discriminate speech sounds.

Cook in Linse (2005: 22) also states that before babies can comprehend words, they listen to the rhythm and melody of the language and have some awareness of interaction and relationship with a speaker. Toddlers listen to both sound and words. Eventually, children start tuning in to words and the meanings attached to them. For example, a very young child will quickly learn the meaning of the word "No!" when she gets too close to something hot on the stove. It means that listening is the first skill that people must mastered before other skills. Moreover, listening can determine how good the achievement of people to communicate each other.

Some theories state that one of the indicator of the children's cognitive development is language development. Krashen (1987) in Linse (2005:12) has examined language development has differentiated the process of language acquisition from the process of language learning. Language acquisition is the natural process used to develop language skill in a child's native language.

Language learning usually refers to the language instruction that take place in classroom.

Listening is the basis for the development of all other skills and the main channel through which the student makes initial contact with the target language and its culture. In detail, the purpose of listening activity is that the students are able to do the instruction or to gain information from different kinds of listening texts or

genres. (for example; monolog: speech, reports, instruction, poems, songs, etc., and dialog: debate, discussion, movie etc.). Moreover, they are able to complete the information and respond to questions.

Listening is the language modality that is used most frequently. Given the importance of listening in language learning and teaching, it is essential for language teachers to help their students become effective listeners. In the communicative approach to language teaching, this means modeling listening strategies and providing listening practice in authentic situations: those that learners are likely to encounter when they use the language outside the classroom.

There are so many ways to teach listening, but for the students always said that listening subject is the difficult study, then how the teacher make the classroom to be enjoy and the students feel relax? The teacher must mix the learning with some new like discussion, debate, conversation, role play, games and etc. this classroom types called by Interactive classroom technique.

This article also gives the solution, how the interactive class will control and make the class be fun and students will understand well what they hear, also how the listening classroom process using interactive classroom techniques. In the other hand, sometimes not all the school has facilitation like electric or electronic media for listening process so the teacher must be can to more active to teach listening, how to make the class be active and run well and also still fun so the students can enjoy it.

This article will be a beneficial contribution to the field of teaching process particularly in listening, like: to apply performance classes to the teacher in teaching listening class.

## **B. DISCUSSION**

### **a. Background to the teaching of listening**

Listening skill is the first skill that should be mastered by young learners when they learn language besides speaking, reading and writing skill. English in Indonesia is still considered as difficult subject at school. Especially in listening, most of student especially young learners get difficulties to comprehend what is spoken in English.

It is natural thing when they do not comprehend because English is a foreign language. English course, whether as a local content, a compulsory or an extracurricular subject at elementary School, is given to equip students with English so they can enhance communicative competence in language accompanying action on a simple basis in the context of school and give awareness the importance of English language to improve competitiveness in a global society. Most of elementary school do not have any tape recorder yet, which contain English speaking by native language or the expert of English language. Thus, English young learner teachers have important role as the sources of teaching and learning. This is because the students are able to listen the teacher`s speech directly. In addition, teacher should be more creative teaching listening to young learners, in other the students are fun and interesting.

Listening skill is foundation for other skills. Children should develop their listening skill when learn foreign language. Based on some references that I have read, it can be concluded that the objectives of teaching listening for young learner are listening the instructions and understand what others are saying, doing to do something, getting information, acquiring message, news, and stories orally.

Listening and understanding speech involves a number of basic processes, some depending upon linguistic competence, some depending upon previous knowledge that is not necessarily of a purely linguistic nature, and some depending upon psychological variables that affect the mobilization of these competence and

knowledge in the particular task situation. The listener must have a continuous set to listen and understand, and as he hears the utterance, he may be helped by some kind of set to process and remember the information transmitted.

Listening is a receptive skill, and receptive skills give way to productive skills. If we have our students produce something, the teaching will be more communicative. We can call listening a decoding -making sense of the message process. We can divide the listening process into 3 stages;

1. Pre-listening (purpose must be given at this stage),
2. During (in-while) listening,
3. Post -listening (speaking).

There is an association between expectation, purpose, and comprehension, therefore a purpose should be given to our learners. We should train students to understand what is being said in conversations to get them to disregard redundancy, hesitation, and ungrammaticality. The major problem is the actual way listening material is presented to the students. We should give a clear lead in what they are going to hear; use some kind of visual back up for them to understand; give questions and tasks in order to clarify the things in their minds; and be sure that these tasks help in learning, not confusing. Students should learn how use the environmental clues; the speaker's facial expression, posture, eye direction, proximity, gesture, tone of voice, and that general surroundings contribute information.

In listening activities, we listen for a purpose. We make an immediate response to what we hear. There are some visual or environmental clues as to the meaning of what is heard. Stretches of heard discourse come in short chunks, and most heard discourse is spontaneous, therefore differs from formal spoken prose in the amount of redundancy 'noise' and colloquialisms, and its auditory character.

In listening to English as a foreign language, the most important features can be defined as:

1. Coping with the sounds,
2. Understanding intonation and stress,
3. Coping with redundancy and noise,
4. Predicting,
5. Understanding colloquial vocabulary,
6. Fatigue,
7. Understanding different accents,
8. Using visual and environmental clues.

This brings us to the thought that, while planning exercises, listening materials, task and visual materials should be taken into consideration. The teacher should produce a suitable discourse while using recordings. A preset purpose, ongoing learner response, motivation, success, simplicity, and feedback should be the things considered while preparing the task. Visual materials are useful for contextualization. We can also categorize the goals of listening as listening for enjoyment, for information, for persuasion, for perception and lastly for comprehension and lastly to solve problems.

Nation and Newton (2009: 40) state that there are two kinds listening processes:

#### 1. Bottom-up Processes

These are the processes the listener uses to assemble the message piece-by piece from the speech stream, going from the parts to the whole. It means that bottom-up process more focus on grammatical relationship in the words. So the listeners understand with the sounds, words, intonation, grammatical structure, and other components of spoken language.

## 2. Top-down Processes

Top-down processes involve the listener in going from the whole their prior knowledge and their content and rhetorical schemata to the parts. In other words, the listener uses what they know of the context of communication to predict what the message will contain, and uses parts of the message to confirm, correct or add to this. In top-down process the listeners should have other background information that they bring to the text. The listeners can predict what kind of information from the text if they have prediction about the text that they will hear before.

We can divide listening for comprehension into three stages;

1. Listening and making no response (following a written text, informal teacher talks)
2. Listening and making short responses (obeying instructions - physical movement, building models, picture dictation. etc.), true- false exercises, noting specific information, etc.
3. Listening and making longer response (repetition and dictation, paraphrasing, answering questions, answering comprehension questions on texts, predictions, filling gaps, summarizing, etc.)

The purposes that should be in a listening activity are giving / providing:

1. General information (understanding of the main points)
2. Specific information (understanding of the particular items)
3. Cultural interest (generally informing about the target language culture)
4. Information about people's attitudes and opinions
5. The organization of ideas

6. Sequence of events
7. Lexical items (words expressing noise / movement)
8. Structural items (their use and meaning)
9. Functional items (their form and use)

In order to teach listening skills, a teacher should firstly state the difficulties. For a student of a foreign language, accurate and intelligent listening is a necessity, and the teacher is responsible to help his / her learners to acquire this skill which provides the very foundation for learning and functioning in a language. That the teacher can observe and isolate the errors in speaking, but could not in listening is a difficulty. In listening, the learner can exercise no controls over the structural and lexical range of the speaker to whom he is listening. Nevertheless, any listener can learn to focus on significant content items, to explain in another way he can learn to listen selectively.

Helping the learners to distinguish sounds, teaching to isolate significant content and informational items for concentration may be provided by controlled listening exercises. One exercise is to give him certain performance objectives -to give him general informational questions that he should be able to answer after he listens the material for the first time. These questions should require only the isolation of facts clearly revealed in the material. Questions that require application or inference from the information contained in the listening exercise are best used at later stages or more advanced students.

More controls are necessary at less advanced levels. Sheets containing sequentially organized and significant questions on context and content -questions that call for one-word answers -serve as useful guides for the student. Such questions help him filter out and listen for significant information. The questions themselves suggest the content and provide the student with an organizational frame for selective listening.



For listening comprehension exercises, we tend to read passages, record news or broadcasts, or prepare lectures. All of them have value, but they are extremely difficult sources for early practice in selective listening. This type of listening exercises does not present the redundancies, the colloquialisms, the hesitations, the gestures and the facial expressions that are an inseparable part of the spoken language. They emphasize informational content and fail to provide the signals used to communicate information and meaning.

Since most of the actual listening the student will be exposed to outside of the class is likely to be real-life conversation, it seems wisest to use materials cast in real-life situations for listening comprehension exercises -at least at the beginning level. The teacher can easily adapt to listening exercises those situations through which the text presents oral drills and communicative activities, just by giving them a slightly different twist. Listening exercises should be as natural as the situations from which they grow. By means of this, a teacher has a great work to do, and has to be a very creative person in order to teach listening communicatively.

#### **b. The development of listening skill**

Teacher of young learners know the importance of teaching children how to listen. As teacher of second or foreign-language learners, it is useful to consider the listening skills that are taught to children learning English as a first language. For example, a five-year-old native speaker who is not able to listen to and follow simple instructions is probably not going to be ready to learn academic content such as color, numbers, shapes, days of week, letters and sounds. Being able to understand and follow simple instructions is one of the foundation listening readiness skills that get children ready to develop other language skills.

The following statements help to summarize how other skill are built on listening.

*You need to hear a word before you can say it.*

*You need to say a word before you can read it.*

*You need to read a word before you can write it.*

Listening capacity refers to an informal measure of one's ability to understand or comprehend spoken language in the context of a story being told or read aloud. Heilman (2002) in Linse (2005: 29) states that children who can segment words and listen to isolated sounds have developed phonological awareness. Phonological awareness refers to the ability to listen and think about the entire range of sounds that occur in a word. By developing listening skill that focus on phonological awareness, children will be better prepared to participate in phonics instructions which will make it easier for them to decode and read words.

### **c. Classroom technique and Activities**

As teacher working with children learning English as foreign language, teachers have to try to blend technique designed for EFL learners with those intended for young learner to learn English as their first language. We sometimes can use approaches which are designed for adult EFL learners and adapt them when necessary so that they will be appropriate for young learners.

There are some classroom technique and activities that can be used to teach listening:

#### **1. Total Physical Response (TPR) activities.**

According to Asher (1977) in Linse (2005: 30), he studied the way very young children acquire language. He wondered why very young children were so good at developing language skills when students in college and university classes had so much difficulty. He observed that that babies spent the first year of their life just listening to language. He noticed that although infants aren't speaking, they are still active users of the language because they are physically responding to what has been said.

Asher took his finding and developed a method which is known as Total Physical Response (TPR). Learners physically respond to oral commands which are given. Just as with babies, learners are expected to respond non-verbally to commands before they are expected to speak. The teacher usually gives an oral command while she demonstrates it. For example, she may jump while she says the word *jump*. The learners follow along with the commands and only speak when they are ready. When they first begin to speak, they repeat the commands given by the teachers.

TPR has several positive aspects. First, it utilizes the auditory, visual, and tactile learning channels. The learners listen and watch as the commands are given. Second, TPR helps to teach children to follow directions and listen attentively two important skills for academic success. Third, in keeping with developmentally appropriate notions or thoughts, children are allowed to listen and then choose when feel comfortable to start speaking. Fourth, this method can easily be adapted in many different ways for young learners.

## 2. TPR songs and fingers plays

TPR can be used with songs and finger-plays. Finger-plays are little chants that children say while moving their fingers and /or hands. One of the most popular finger-plays is “Head and Shoulders”. At first, you chant the finger-play as the children use their hand and their fingers to point to the correct body parts. After they understand the chant, the children can chant and point the finger-play.

Example:

Head and shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes,  
Head and shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes,  
Eyes and ears and mouth and nose,  
Head and shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes,

3. TPR Storytelling

TPR can also be used in conjunction with storytelling. It works especially well with stories where sentence patterns are repeated, and tell the story using puppets or storytelling pieces. Storytelling pieces are pictures of characters and different items in a story that children manipulate or move around as the story is told.

4. YES / NO Card

When using TPR YES/NO cards, we can easily measure children's listening capacity. When using YES/NO cards, children are asked questions and then respond by showing a yes or no card.

As a teacher, we can look around and see how many children were able to comprehend the question and answer it correctly. We can then adjust our questioning to meet the needs of the learners in the classroom by making the subsequent questions easier or more difficult. Another advantages to using yes/no card is that the adjustment to instruction can take place instantaneously unlike written assignments where it is necessary to wait and look at everyone's work before adjusting the language level and questioning level to meet the needs of the learners.

5. TPR Drawing

All of the children can be given the same instructions but should be given latitude in how they carry out the instructions.

6. Syllable clapping

One way to help children learn the way that words are broken into syllables and into separate words is to chant the words while you clap them in syllables. This is useful for the tactile learners as well as auditory learners.

#### 7. Minimal Pairs

Minimal pairs are two words that differ in only one sound. For example, bat and pat are minimal pairs.

### C. CONCLUSION

Given the importance of listening in language learning and teaching, it is essential for language teachers to help their students become effective listeners. In the communicative approach to language teaching, this means modeling listening strategies and providing listening practice in authentic situations: those that learners are likely to encounter when they use the language outside the classroom.

There are a number of ways to help children become more conscious of auditory patterns that occur in language. There are so many way to teach listening, but for the students always said that listening subject is the difficult study. As teacher working with children learning English as foreign language, teachers have to try to blend technique designed for EFL learners with those intended for young learner to learn English as their first language.

Based on the theories above, it can be concluded that there are some rules of listening in young learner classes;

1. Even though listening is a receptive skill, the students should not be passive when they learn in listening class.
2. The students should be attracted with different listening task according to their age, learning style, listening capacity and phonological awareness.
3. The students should be practiced to listen to the English sound carefully.

4. The teacher should instruct the young learners to follow simple instructions to get them ready to develop other language skills.
5. The teacher should give different listening task in the class, it can be by listening and do, listening and draw, listening and mime, listening and predict, listening and respond, listening and write, listening and identify, listening and match, listening and complete, listening and read.
6. The teacher should give a different task to the same text each time to the student.
7. The media that is used by the teacher such as audio tools should be in good quality.
8. The teacher should be conscious of the importance of familiarity, difficulty and teacher's language. It is better to the teacher to teach listening by repeating, simplifying, and using gestures, because intonation and expressions that can help children to figure out the intended meaning.
9. It is important for teachers to teach listening by using stories, games, routines, rhymes, songs. The students may not understand every words, but they can understand the meaning from the context, visuals, and gestures as in real life.
10. In teaching listening both of processes, bottom-up and top-down should be addressed to the students in the class.

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