Teaching English as a Second Language

Unit Nine: Teaching Students to Comprehend Spoken English

THE ROLE OF LISTENING IN SLA

Comprehension Approach

* Comprehension abilities precede productive skills in language learning.
* The teaching of speaking should be delayed until comprehension skills are established.
* Skills acquired through listening transfer to other skills.
* Teaching should emphasize meaning rather than form.
* Teaching should minimize learner stress.

Krashen's Monitor Model of Second Language Acquisition

- **Acquisition-learning hypothesis** (Acquisition is subconscious, whereas learning is consciously developed by instruction and aided by error correction).
- **Monitor hypothesis** (Conscious learning is limited to use as a monitor that can edit and make corrections in the learner's output before s/he writes or speaks, but language fluency relies on acquisition).
- **Natural order hypothesis** (Learners acquire linguistic structures in a predictable order in L1 and a similar order is present in L2 acquisition).
- **Input hypothesis** (Learners acquire language by exposure to **comprehensible input**: **"i +1"**. Learning is first **focused on meaning** and structure is learned as a consequence of understanding the message).
- **Affective filter hypothesis** (Depending on the learner's state of mind, the affective filter limits what is noticed and what is acquired. The presence of an affective filter could act as a mental block if a poor affective state existed)

The Natural Approach

Total Physical Response (TPR)

APPROACHES TO THE TEACHING OF LISTENING SKILLS

The Natural Approach

Principles	Pedagogical Implications
1. Comprehension precedes productions. That is, listening and reading skills will be acquired before speaking and writing skills.	a) Teachers speak in the target language only. b) Content is selected according to its relevance to student interests. c) Teachers consistently provide comprehensible input.
2. Language production emerges from nonverbal responses, single words, combinations of two or three words, to phrases, sentences, and ultimately to complex discourse.	a) The "silent period" is allowed; students are never forced to speak before they are comfortable doing so. b) Error correction is given only when errors interfere with communication.
3. The syllabus and course content is organized around topics with communicative goals rather than linguistic structures.	a) The teaching focus is on communicating ideas with little or no attention to grammatical accuracy in the early comprehension and production stages.
4. The learning environment must be conducive to language learning.	a) Activities should ensure that students can practice the language in a supportive, nonthreatening setting that reduces anxiety, promotes motivation, and builds self-esteem.

Example 1
http://www.esl-lab.com/index.htm

- **Pre Listening**

  -Purpose: introduce learners to the topic.

  -Purpose:Introduce vocabulary

- **Listening Exercises**

  (play listening multiple times)

  -Purpose: Listening for details

  -Type of Activities:

   -M/C activities

  -gap filling activities

- **Vocabulary Activities**

  -Purpose: Review use & comprehension of new vocabulary

  -Type of Activities:

   -M/C, T/F, gap filling, match, text completion, etc. (changes by level of learner)

- **Post Listening Activities**

  -Purpose: Discussion, comprehension checks

Other Examples

* http://www.elllo.org/

* http://www.eslfast.com/

* http://www.voanews.com/learningenglish/home/

* http://www.englishmedialab.com/listening.html

Discussion

* Is it really good for L2 learners to delay their oral production?

* Does the natural approach attend to learner's output? Can comprehensible input alone lead to learners' comprehensible output?

THE USE OF COMPUTERS IN TEACHING LISTENING SKILLS WITH THE NATURAL APPROACH

Comprehensible Input	Low-anxiety Learning Environment
1. Computers allow teachers to add multisensory elements, text, sound, pictures, video, and animation, which provide **meaningful contexts to facilitate comprehension**. 2. Computers allow learners to hear the available input **as many times as needed** until they feel they understand it. Example: - [Adult Learning Activities](#) - [California Distance Learning Project](#) (news stories and Interactive exercises)	1. Multimedia programs can be designed to present material at **different difficulty levels** with adjustments in speed of delivery according to **individual learner needs.** Example: - [Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab](#) 2. Computers allow learners to develop their **autonomy** to review and practice materials as many times as they wish. 3. Computers can provide **immediate**, **nonjudgmental feedback** and additional assistance to learners. They correct learners' errors without giving them embarrassment or anxiety.

Discussion

- According to your language learning experience with computers, do you think those Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) programs always provide comprehensible input, particularly in listening?

- Do you think the feedback from the computer is sufficient for language learners to develop their listening skills ?

TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE (TPR)

Principles	Pedagogical implications
1. Listening comprehension skills are developed **before** oral production skills (based on the natural order of L1 acquisition).	1. Teachers speak in the target language to students and focus on students' listening comprehension in the early stage.
2. **Psychomotor association**: Learning is enhanced through **the association of language with motor activity**. Motor activity is a function of the right-brain, and the right-brain activities should precede the language processing functions of the left-brain.	2. Teachers give **command forms** (i.e. "Open the door") to which students respond by physically doing the action.
3. TPR **lowers** students' **affective filter** and **stress level**.	3. Teachers ask students to listen only but not to give an oral response.

The Use of Computers in Teaching Listening Skills with the TPR: (Programs for Purchase)

* **Examples:**

* - TPR Games (program description from TPR World Website)

* - Review of Live Action Spanish Interactive (from Language Learning and Technology, Vol. 8, No. 3, September 2004, pp. 40-43)

Discussion Question

* TPR is usually used in the face-to-face classroom. Is there anything missing when TPR is used on a computer?

"Listening is vital in the language classroom because it provides input for the learner. Without understanding input at the right level, any learning simply cannot begin. Listening is thus fundamental to speaking."

Rost, 1994

THE ACT OF LISTENING
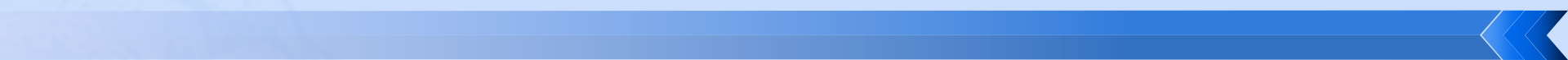
Active Listening

- Understand
- Interpret
- evaluate

- One way exchanges
- Intrapersonal communication

What happens when a learner listens?

- determines a reason for listening;
- takes the raw speech and deposits an image of it in short-term memory;
- attempts to organize the information by identifying the type of speech event (conversation, lecture, radio ad) and the function of the message (persuade, inform, request);
- predicts information expected to be included in the message;
- recalls background information (schemata) to help interpret the message;
- assigns a meaning to the message;
- checks that the message has been understood;
- determines the information to be held in long-term memory;
- deletes the original form of the message that had been received into short-term memory

Processing what we hear

Top down processing

* Background knowledge & global understanding

Bottom up processing

* Uses language data
* Sounds
* Words
* Grammatical relationships

Top down processing

Global

* Previous knowledge on a topic
* Situational knowledge

Background

* Schemata or plans about the overall structure of events & the relationship between them.
* Predicting a topic in discourse & being able to infer a sequence of events
* Real-world experiences and the expectations we have, about how people behave.

Bottom up processing

- Decoding sounds

Eg. /p/ is recognised as being /p/ and not /b/, /i:/ as being /i:/ and not /i/ or /e/ and so on

- Combining sounds into words and words are decoded (i.e the listener recognizes that s/he has heard /pi:t/ and not /pit/ /bit/ /bi:t/ /bi:d/

- Words combined into sentences and listener works out meaning of /pi:t/ : as in *I saw Pete yesterday* or *I bought some peat for the garden*.

- Recognizing intonation

Consider

Imagine the following situations:

Over lunch, your friend tells you a story about a recent holiday, which was a disaster. You listen with interest and interject at appropriate moments, maybe to express surprise or sympathy.

That evening, another friend calls to invite you to a party at her house the following Saturday. As you've never been to her house before, she gives you directions. You listen carefully and make notes.

Top down listening activities

- Encourage them to use their knowledge of the topic to understand the content by 'guessing meaning'

- Use pictures, sequencing events, listening to conversations and identifying where they take place

- Have students read information about a topic and then listen to find whether or not the same points are mentioned
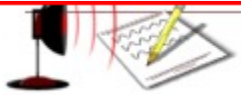
1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

Bottom up listening activities

- The teacher reads out a number of sentences
- Students write down how many words there would be in the written form (ie. Writes the sentence)
- Learners compare answers before listening again

- I'm going to the shop.
- Do you want some chocolate?
- Let's have a party!
- I'd better go soon.
- You shouldn't have told him.
- What are you doing?
- There isn't any coffee.
- What have you got?
- He doesn't like it.
- It's quite a long way.
- Why did you think you'd be able to?
- Can you tell him I called?

Bottom up or Top down?

1. Which top down/bottom up processes helped you to understand the language in this video?

2. What aspects of this conversation do you think an ESL learner would struggle with?

Purpose of listening

Interactional purposes

* The focus is on **harmonious communication** in social contexts.
* Interactional uses of language typically include greetings and small talk that center on **noncontroversial topics** that elicit agreement among the participants.
* Interactional uses of language do **not** require careful attention to details and facts.

Transactional Purposes

* The focus is on **conveying information** and language use is **message oriented**.
* Transactional uses of language include listening to lectures, taking notes, and practicing dictations and cloze exercises that **require understanding of details**.
* Transactional language is **explicit**, **clear**, and **coherent** in order for the listener to comprehend the meaning of the message.

Discussion

In everyday language use, we often carry out both interactional and transactional functions of language at the same time. Can you always distinguish which language function you are using? If it is difficult to distinguish them, then why do we have to learn these two functions separately? Explain your answer.

Identifying Linguistic Features
Responding to Requests and Commands
Interacting as a Listener
Comprehending Extended Speech
Problem Solving

WHAT KINDS OF LISTENING ACTIVITIES DO ESL TEACHERS USE?

Identifying Linguistic Features

* Make learners aware of the linguistic features of English

* Focus on bottom-up processing

* Little attention given to transactional or interactional purposes

Activities for Identifying Linguistic Features

Sound blends

Didja have a good time?

Whatcha doing?

Where ya goin?

Stress & Rhythm

"He's a great actor"

* Stress on nouns, main verbs, adverbs, adjectives only

"terrif<u>ic</u>"

* Words with more than one syllable receive stress on ONE syllable only in the word

Stress & Rhythm Listening Activity

Where would you mark stress in each of these?

1. Would you sell my car because I've gone to France?

2. Where did you go?

3. Roses are red....

4. Close the door!

Responding to Requests and Commands

Total Physical Response

Teacher Command:	Sit down.
Student Response:	(Students sit down)
Teacher Command:	Open your books.
Student Response:	(Students open books)
Teacher Command:	Write your name.
Student Response:	Students write their name

Creating commands

* Select action verbs

  e.g. touch
* Combine a verb with a noun

  e.g. nose + touch; chin + touch

Command: Touch your nose/Touch your chin

Interacting as a Listener

Chat

* Students view short video clips of interactions in different social settings
* Aim of these activities is for student to not only comprehend the listening, but to also work out what is a safe topic to talk about and how to maintain the interaction

Eavesdropping

* Focuses attention on the function of listening
* Aim is to teach students the value of listening in on a conversation

Comprehending Extended Speech

Picture ordering activity

Students listen to a weather forecast and draw pictures representing the weather for each day in the week.

Cloze activities
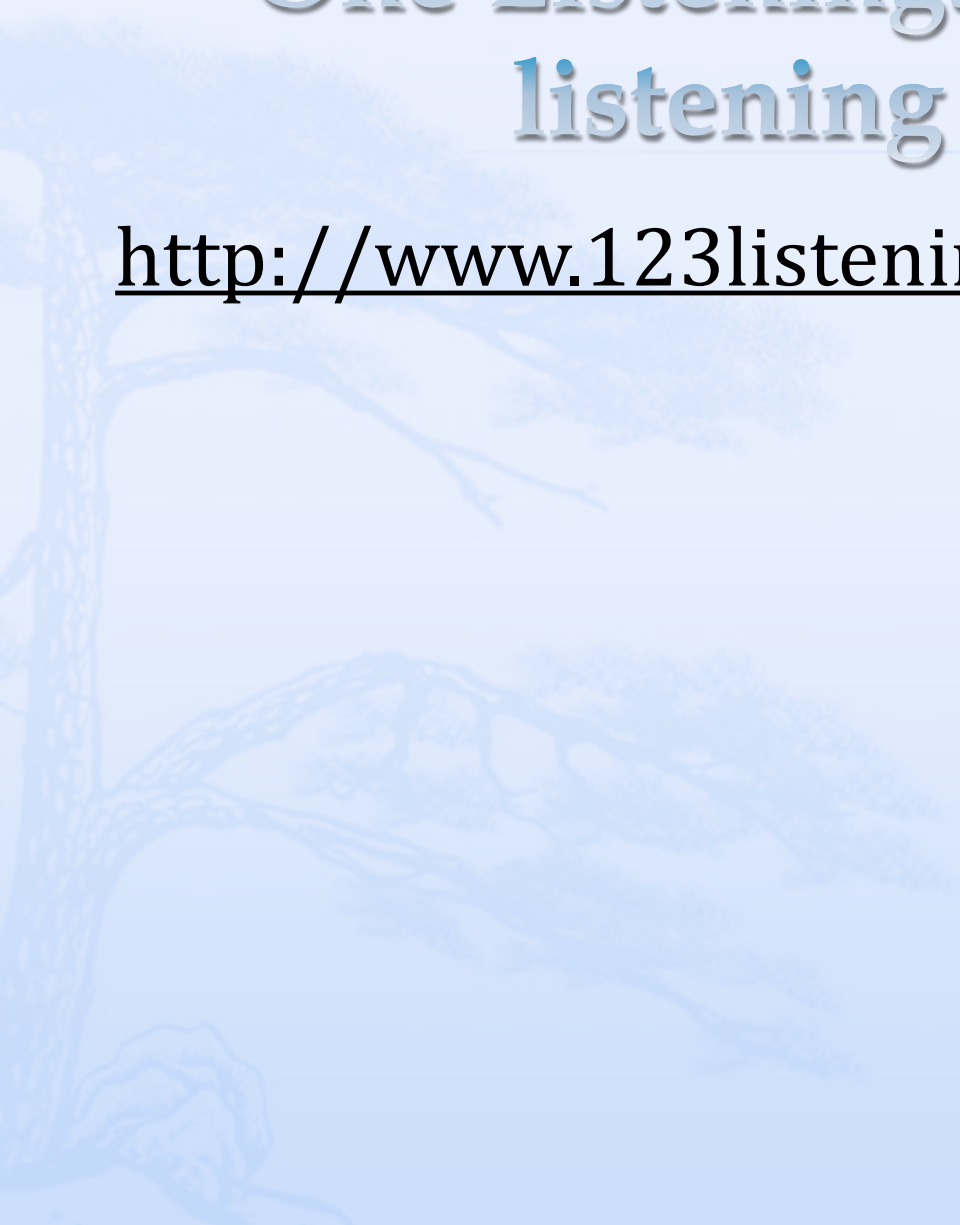
In these activities students are given a worksheet with a written extract of a listening passage. Each of the sentences on the worksheet have words missing and students are expected to complete the sentences with the word(s) they hear in the listening. There are two ways to do this type of activity. Learners may either be given a choice of words to choose from or not.

One Listening: Multi-leveled listening activities

http://www.123listening.com

3

123Listening.com — Choose from the words below and write the words.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

Word Bank:

sunny	snowing	windy
partly cloudy	raining	clear
hot	cold	hailing
stormy	foggy	cloudy

123Listening.com
For downloadable audio to match this worksheet visit www.123listening.com.

4

123Listening.com — Choose the Correct Picture and Write the Answer

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

123Listening.com
For downloadable audio to match this worksheet visit www.123listening.com.

Cloze Activities with Listening

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdVIFiQy8v4&feature=related

http://www.last.fm/music/Eagles/_/Hotel+California

Hotel Song – The Eagles – Hotel California

http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMTE4MDg2Nj My.html

On a dark desert highway, cool wind in my _____

Warm smell of colitis, rising up through the air

_____ ahead in the distance, I saw a shimmering light

My head grew heavy and my sight grew dim

I had to stop for the _____

There she stood in the doorway;

I heard the mission _____

And I was thinking to myself,

this could be heaven or this could be _____

Then she lit up a candle and she showed me the way

There were voices down the _____

I thought I heard them say...

Welcome to the _____ California

Such a lovely place

Such a lovely face

Plenty of room at the _____ California

Any time of year, you can find it here

Her mind is tiffany-twisted, she got the Mercedes bends

She got a lot of pretty, pretty boys, that she calls friends

Welcome to the _____ California

Such a lovely place

Such a lovely face

They living it up at the _____ California

What a nice surprise, bring your alibis

Mirrors on the ceiling,

The pink champagne on _____

And she said we are all just prisoners here, of our own device

And in the masters chambers,

They gathered for the feast

The stab it with their steely knives,

But they just can't kill the _____

Last thing I remember, I was

Running for the door

Problem Solving

* Students expected to solve a problem based upon what they hear in a listening passage

HOW DO ESL TEACHERS USE MEDIA TO TEACH LISTENING?

Media in the EFL/ESL Classroom

radio

* Songs
* Drama
* Advertisements
* Talk shows

television

* Quiz shows
* Soap operas
* Comedies
* Reality shows
* Cartoons
* Documentaries
* Educational programs
* News
* Weather
* Movies
* Award shows
* Commercials

Techniques for Using Multimedia in the Classroom

Silent Viewing	Soundtrack Only	Beginning Only	Ending Only	Split Viewing (One)	Split Viewing (Two)
• View video w/o sound to consider what is going on and what speakers are saying/doing	• Listen to soundtrack only w/o picture and speculate on what speakers look like, the setting, the location	• View the beginning of a sequence, the predict what will happen	• View the ending and consider what happened earlier	• Some stdts view the material w/or sound. Others listen w/o viewing. Groups come together to create a fuller understanding of the context & content	• Half the class sits with back to screen. Half can see the screen. Both can hear. Pairs then build a fuller understanding of context & content

For Teaching Listening

PLANNING A LISTENING LESSON

Techniques to Improve Students Listening Skills

* Keep listening passages short
* Play the tape a sufficient number of times
* Let students discuss their answers
* Don't immediately acknowledge correct answers with words or facial expressions—throw the answers back to the class ("What do you think of Bill's answer—do you agree?)
* Don't be led by one strong student. Have they all got it?

Techniques to Improve Students Listening Skills

- Aim to get the students to agree together without your help.
- Play little bits of the tape again and again until it's clear
- Give help if they are completely stuck—but still with the aim of getting them to work it out on their own
- Give them control of the tape recorder
- Don't cheat them by changing your requirements halfway!
- Don't let them lose heart. Try to make sure the task is just within their abilities.

Lead-in

Pre-listening: intro to topic, discussion, looking at pictures, etc.

Pre-task work (optional)

Eg. Looking through worksheet, work on vocabulary, predicting, etc.

Set Clear Task

Play tape

Students should not be trying to understand everything. They only need enough to do a specific assigned task

Yes.

No.

Could they do the task?

Conclude

Tie up loose ends, lead to follow-up activities, review what has been learned, etc
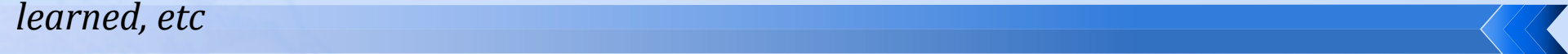
Feedback on task St-st OR St-T

Don't ask unfair questions—you set a clear task—have they done it? Don't throw in a whole pile of extra questions now.

Suggestions for Formatting a Listening Lesson

Pre-listening Stage:

a) Introducing the topic and assessing their background knowledge of the topic

b) Activating their existing knowledge through discussion. Reading through comprehension questions in advance, working out own opinion on a topic, predicting content from the title etc. can be done.

c) Clarifying any necessary contextual information and vocabulary to comprehend the text. In this regard showing pictures, maps or graphs and may be helpful.

d) Inform students of listening expectations (i.e. what they have to do)
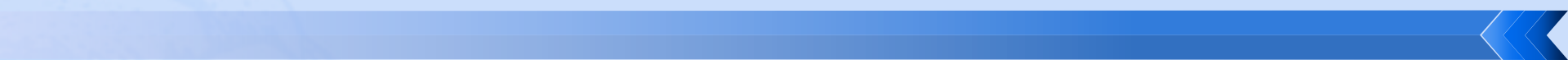
Suggestions for Formatting the Listening Lesson

<u>Listening to the Passage:</u>

a) Play the tape 1 time through and have students listen for the main idea

b) Before playing the tape a second time, write some basic comprehension questions on the board for learners to focus on.

c) Before playing the tape a 3rd time, draw learners attention to the questions and review questions with the students

d) Play the tape and have learners listen and answer the prepared questions

Suggestions for Formatting a Listening Lesson

Post-listening Stage:

a. Review vocabulary items found in the listening

B. Comprehension check of specific information

c. Review student answers to the questions

Homework

Develop a listening lesson plan for an intermediate level class. Include a listening worksheet for students.

References

1. Gebhard, Jerry G. (2009). <u>Teaching English as a Foreign/Second Language.</u> Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.

2. Parrish, Betsy. (2004). <u>Teaching Adult ESL.</u> New York: McGraw-Hill.

3. Rubin, J. and I. Thompson. (1994). <u>How to Be a More Successful Language Learner. Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1994.</u>

4. Van Duzer. (1997). Improving ESL Learners' Listening Skills: At the Workplace and Beyond. <u>Journal of the</u> <u>Center for Adult English Language Acquisition.</u> (www.cal.org/caela/esl)resources/digests/LISTENQA.html)