

TEFL - The place of listening in the L2 curriculum: a review

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Introduction

It is important to try and get as clear as possible what it is that we will be discussing under

- definition of listening and
- overview of listening comprehension studies.

Introduction

- In second language research, listening opportunities are often characterized as the linguistics environment – the stage for SLA. This environment, that is, the speakers of the target language and their speech to the L2 learners, provide linguistics input in the form of listening and interaction opportunities embedded in social and pedagogic situations.

- It has been noted that for a person to learn second language three major conditions are required: (1) a learner who realizes the need to learn the second language and is motivated to do so, (2) Speaker of the target language who know it well enough to provide learner with access to the spoken language and that support (such as simplification, repletion, and feedback) they need for learning it; and (3) a social setting which bring the leaner in frequent enough and sustain enough contact with target language speakers to make language learning possible.

Listening

- Listening is required in two of these conditions, and is therefore an essential means of language development, a point that is often overlooked in language pedagogy and research. The learner, in order to acquire the language, must come to understand the input and pay attention to the forms in the input. The more students get input from listening, the richer the knowledge they acquire then the more fluent they become. It is educator who need to design and place listening in the right position so that it can bring the leaner in frequent enough and sustains enough contact with target language speakers to make language learning possible.

What is listening

- What is listening? Rost (2002, 1) says in the 1920s and 1930s with advancing knowledge of human brain, listening was defined as a largely unconscious process controlled by hidden cultural 'schemata'. In the 1940s, when advances in telecommunications were exploding, and information-processing was seen as the new scientific frontier, listening was defined in terms of successful transmission and recreation of 'messages'. In the 1950s when computer science began to dominate, listening was defined in terms of analyzing and tagging input so that it could be stored and retrieved efficiently. In the 1960s, with the raise of transpersonal psychology, listening included heuristics for understanding the intent of the speaker.

- The definition keeps changing depend on the trend. It can be assumed that other interest influence the definition of listening. With the renewed interest in anthropology in the 1970s, definitions of listening as a interpreting the cultural significance of 'speech behavior' gained acceptance. In the 1980s and 1990s, with the advances in computer software for dealing with vast quantities and types of data, listening came to be defined as parallel processing of input. And you? What is listening?

Overview of listening comprehension studies

- Although listening is now comprehended as a critical dimension in language learning, it still gives puzzle in understanding the processes. Listening gets little attention compare to the other three skills (reading, writing and speaking), which get more attention. Teachers often expect students to develop their listening skill by *osmosis* and without help (Mendelsohn, 1984; Oxford, 1993 in Osada, 2004). In the osmosis approach, also known as the *Audiolingual method*, it is believed that if students listen to the target language all day, they will improve their listening comprehension skills through experience.

- The roots of audiolingualism lie in the early years of the 20s century, and had a significant influence on theories of language teaching. Behaviorist drew inspiration from Pavlov's conditioning experiments – *stimulus* and *response*. This traditional approach to listening, which treated it as an enabling skill for production-oriented activities, “has trapped students in a frenzied ‘Hear it, repeat it!’, ‘Hear it, answer it!’, or ‘Hear it, translate it!’ nightmare” (Meyer, 1984, p. 343 in Osada, 2004, p. 54).

- Arguments keeps coming and changing the comprehension of listening. It began to be expressed in the mid-1960s by Rivers who had enough foresight to say that, “Speaking does not of itself constitute communication unless what is being said is comprehended by another person (p. 196), and that “teaching the comprehension of spoken speeches is therefore of primary importance if the communication aim is to be reached” (p. 204) in Osada (2004). According to Field (1998, p. 110), in the late 1960s and early 1970s, listening comprehension lessons followed a relatively consistent format.

- More attention grows to listening in 1980s and 1990s. During the 1980s, explorations of intricacies of this complex skill, more research, and curriculum development on listening comprehension were done, and they continue dramatically in 1990s. Throughout the 1990s, attention to listening in language teaching and aural comprehension in second language or foreign language acquisition became an important area of study (Osada, 2004, p.55).

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○ Thank you

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