



SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING LISTENING PRACTICES IN ESL/EFL SETTINGS

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Abstract:

The purpose of this systematic study is to investigate successful teaching strategies to improve ESL/EFL classroom listening comprehension. The foundation of communication is listening. For those learning languages, it remains among the toughest abilities. This paper identifies three phases of productive behaviors based on a thorough evaluation of the present literature: pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening. Important techniques are activating past knowledge, employing actual objects, and combining task-based and introspective and interactive activities. It also highlights two forms of processing techniques—top-down and bottom-up—that can enable a reader to acquire knowledge. Including diverse listening activities that mirror real-world scenarios could enhance students' engagement and language learning through the implications of language pedagogy. This paper emphasizes the need for fresh developments in listening education and demands more empirical research using customized strategies addressing learner anxiety and motivation in listening environments.

Keywords: teaching listening, ESL/EFL, top-down processing, bottom-up processing, pre-listening strategies, interactive listening tasks, language pedagogy

1. Introduction

The teaching of listening skills in ESL/EFL classrooms serves a variety of important purposes. Students listen for specific information such as times, dates, addresses, or instructions. They also listen to the general content of passages as part of everyday communication and workplace interactions. For this reason, the teacher should make full use of language skills to convey lesson content skillfully, hence underlining the importance of listening activities within language classes. Listening activities are a vital

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part of ESL and EFL lessons regardless of the learners' proficiency level since one of the basic skills for any kind of communication in a foreign language is listening.

Any method chosen to teach listening effectively has to be based on sound principles of comprehensible input and designed to serve communicative purposes. According to Newton and Nation (2020), the focus of listening lessons should always correspond to the purpose of the listening activity. This very purpose will determine what kind of listening practice is required, whether it be based on authentic discourse or teacher-created materials.

The purpose of listening activities may be either top-down or bottom-up. In top-down listening, students are focused on understanding general content, emotions, or attitudes. In contrast, in bottom-up listening, students focus on specific elements such as individual words, word sequences, or grammatical structures. Whatever the focus, listening practice can be intensive, aimed at detailed comprehension, or extensive, promoting broader listening skills. By focusing on the purpose for which students will be using their listening, teachers can devise activities that are both engaging and effective in developing students' listening ability to support their overall language proficiency.

2. Listening Stages

Real-life listening typically falls into two categories: responsive listening and selective listening (Friston *et al.*, 2021). When listening to a song, science lecture, TV news, or weather forecast, responsive listening typically does not require a response. In selective listening, one listens to complicated verbal input and is usually expected to respond. When a learner hears someone say, "Close that window, please!" they should understand and respond appropriately. To improve the listening performance of students, we recommend helping them develop both responsive and selective listening skills. Exercises should also focus on the differences between informal, everyday spoken language, which is richer in colloquial expressions and often elliptical, and the more formal registered language that is used in magazine articles or academic lectures.

There are four basic steps to teaching listening activities. This helps students learn what to listen for and how to approach their listening tasks. The first step is inductive learning. Beginning students typically have a limited vocabulary and should listen for specific words or phrases. To help learners focus on the words or phrases they will need to listen for, the teacher can engage in deductive learning and tactical pre-teaching as the second step. The third step is comprehension, in which the students engage in sound recognition and word recall. Finally, judgment and response involve students in discussing and recognizing patterns and idiomatic expressions in what they have heard. This discussion helps learners evaluate their overall ability to understand the speaker's communicative intentions. When structuring the listening task in the classroom, we are, in effect, establishing criteria for judging the success of the listening exercise.

2.1 Pre-Listening Stage

The pre-listening stage of a lesson is critical for students as it activates their prior knowledge, encourages predictions about the content, and helps them contextualize the situation and discourse (Madani & Kheirzadeh, 2022). Generating student interest in the listening topic is essential, and teachers must actively engage learners with the text. Employing varied activities—such as listing ideas, brainstorming vocabulary, and other topic-related exercises—stimulates curiosity and builds anticipation.

Tailoring the pre-listening activities to meet learners' needs further enhances their ability to connect with the tasks and the upcoming material. This stage is not isolated from prior planning; the process begins when the teacher selects materials for the listening lesson.

In Business English courses or business-focused lessons, listening tasks should reflect real-world conditions, including time constraints, deadlines, and the hierarchical relationships learners may encounter. Selecting or adapting topics to match students' needs, interests, and preferences fosters deeper cognitive engagement and aligns with an emotionally driven motivational framework, thereby enhancing both comprehension and language application.

2.2 While-Listening Stage

Teachers actively engage with the students during the while-listening stage, ensuring that they understand what they hear. In this stage, the comprehension activities are held so that listening does not become a passive activity. Activities in this stage usually develop the detail of the text and draw students' attention to thematic points, changes of mood, feelings expressed, intonation, register, etc. (Özçelik *et al.*, 2023; Nadig, 2021). Most, if not all, of the tasks in this stage are done through oral practice before moving on to a written task, which is primarily for comprehension. They can also be enjoyable activities for students, which makes listening less of a chore.

The while-listening stage requires teachers to focus on students' process, product, and language. Therefore, pre-listening tasks may have provided the 'what' and 'why,' but they rarely need to provide the 'how.' They just prepare learners by raising their awareness or interest in what they will listen to. Post-listening tasks, of course, deal with what is left and have to clarify the process of comprehension and work to intensify learning from this stage as it progresses to the post-stage. Mistakes in understanding the listening extractions, as well as dealing with feedback on practice, are important parts of learning in complex tasks. During the whole stage, we are mainly concerned with ensuring accurate comprehension of the listening activity. In a lesson on the topic of the simple future, I used a worksheet to predict what would happen in the future, where students had to match sentences and images. This was followed by a text in which students had to answer the questions, listening and circling the options, filling gaps in the text, and linking sentence beginnings to endings.

2.3 Post-Listening Stage

After the listening activity, it is important to provide the learners with the opportunity to interact with the listening material in a more relaxed way, which includes listening again to the whole or part of it. Tell your students the exact reason for listening, i.e., "*We will listen again to hear all of the 'x' words that we can and try to define the words with words from preceding or following sentences.*" The main purpose of a post-listening activity is to reinforce the substance of the lesson that was presented through the materials in the main stage of the lesson. Activities may take the form of summary or pronunciation exercises, code-switching or translation, follow-up questions, discussion, open-ended exercises, summarizing, analyses, providing feedback, role-play speeches, reaction, and response exercises, and a narrative task (Movva *et al.*, 2022). Students also discuss with the whole class answers to questions, ideas for further work, connections with similar topics or texts, personal opinions, and misconceptions.

It is vital that the listening activity finishes with feedback on the language function you chose for the listening task. After activating their ears, ensure that the learners acquire knowledge that they can use in the future. Renewing what they learned from the listening text and instructor's speech takes time. Write down what happened during listening or reading and lead a discussion on areas that were hard, even if they were small. Focus on the language, the text's purposes and meanings, and the way it was presented. Do not forget to include any new words, phrases, idioms, or collocations that were used. It will enable the instructor to ensure that students understand the text and its contributory elements.

3. Listening Sub-Skills

Research shows that listening is far from a single, straightforward skill; it actually involves a range of sub-skills that work together to help us comprehend spoken language (Putri, 2022). These sub-skills come into play at different stages of listening, such as during pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening activities. Although many people are capable of hearing sounds, understanding them is often more challenging because effective listening goes beyond hearing—it requires decoding and interpreting signs and symbols to make sense of the message.

Good listeners rely on purposeful strategies designed to boost comprehension. These strategies involve a thoughtful, step-by-step approach to listening that helps learners store, recall, and analyze spoken information. For listeners to use these strategies well, they need to actively engage with them, particularly in the pre-listening phase, where important sub-skills are introduced and sharpened.

Perceptual sub-skills play a critical role in recognizing sounds and helping students identify the topic, setting, and timing of spoken language. Exercises like listing synonyms or visualizing ideas through keywords are commonly used to support learners at this stage.

Memory sub-skills are equally important. They help students retain and recall key information from what they've heard. These skills are most useful in both pre- and post-

listening tasks, where learners are encouraged to focus on specific details and follow instructions carefully.

Other sub-skills, such as reconstruction and comparison, are also valuable. Reconstruction helps students put ideas and events into a logical order, while comparison enables them to relate new content to what they already know. By using these tools, listeners can link fresh information to existing knowledge, deepening their understanding of the material.

Additional strategies involving vocabulary, context, sequencing, and patterns are essential for strengthening comprehension. When teachers systematically develop these sub-skills, students become more proficient in decoding spoken language, interpreting messages, and grasping the speaker's intended meaning.

3.1 Prediction

Listening comprehension has often been overlooked in traditional language teaching (Nazarieh *et al.*, 2022). Instruction has typically centered on grammar and vocabulary, with more focus on speaking, reading, and writing. Since speaking and listening are closely connected, one might expect that listening would be equally prioritized. However, in practice, people often listen for external purposes—like a teacher wanting to know if a student understood a message—rather than focusing on how they process what they hear. Classroom dialogues can feel artificial, making it hard to keep students motivated, and teachers frequently struggle to find the best methods for improving listening skills through meaningful exercises.

This section explores practical strategies for making listening activities more engaging and effective. Listening is a complex skill, and extensive research over the past decade has explored its various dimensions. The goal is to integrate proven strategies using authentic materials and post-listening tasks. Future discussions will also cover the impact of pronunciation, rhythm, stress, and intonation on listening comprehension.

3.2 Previewing

The purpose of previewing is to establish a purpose for listening. Since the way we listen depends on why we are listening, it is necessary for students to know why they are listening on a particular occasion. This, in turn, influences the information we expect them to extract from the listening text. These expectations are likely to be specific to a given topic. Previewing is also a technique that naturally leads to activating background knowledge and experience. Being an ESL teacher means deciding what students should expect and making sure they do. An instructor can stimulate students' expectations or predictions by using pre-recording procedures such as discussing or writing the title of a listening passage or discussing the topic or theme of the whole passage. Then the teacher will start the listening task, and students will listen to test their pre-listening predictions about the passage.

When designing listening activities, teachers should follow a few essential guidelines to ensure maximum effectiveness. As noted by Liang and Galda (2009), relying too heavily on prediction exercises can reduce their impact. It's best to use predictions

sparingly, reserving them for situations where students are ready to make informed guesses using their prior knowledge and contextual hints. Additionally, students usually find it helpful—and satisfying—to check their predictions against the actual answers, as this reinforces their learning.

To use predictions effectively, teachers must incorporate them thoughtfully and with a clear purpose. Unfortunately, many educators skip this step and dive straight into the main content of the lesson. This common oversight fails to tap into the power of activating students' background knowledge and real-world experiences with language—an essential component for making prediction exercises meaningful and successful.

By taking time to prepare students properly and guiding them to draw on what they already know, teachers can help learners make accurate predictions during listening tasks. Not only does this enhance comprehension, but it also creates a more engaging and interactive learning experience.

3.3 Semantic Mapping

Semantic mapping is one of the most productive means of bringing students' backgrounds into play before listening activities. Unlike individual tasks, this technique is led by the teacher to prepare students for what they will hear. Encouraging them to make associations sharpens their focus on critical points and grassroots integrating the content in an organized way. Exploring the topic, forming meaningful connections, creating the semantic map, and answering open-ended questions regarding the listening material are typically the basic steps of the process.

For example, if the assignment is to have a conversation at the bank, the teacher may ask students what comes to mind in their brainstorming on "money," "loans," "tellers," and "transactions." In a typical scenario, the teacher begins the activity with a blank semantic mapping; listens to particular areas or aspects defined by the teacher, and completes these key areas of the semantic map with the students. The teacher will merge these into a columnar structure so students can use it to record these ideas or concepts.

The next step is to establish a connection between the listening purpose and these concepts. With questions related to the concept map, the teacher proceeds to discuss each idea, showing how they relate to the central topic. Thus, a guided exploration will be put forth, making students think and acquire new insights as the semantic map develops. The process, however takes a dynamic dimension; thus, it illustrates to learners' relationships of ideas, much like a web of thoughts moving outwards.

This makes it an interactive, collaborative experience for teachers who give their students this important learning tool. This background improves their understanding and better processing of the listening material, thus deepening and broadening the learning experience.

3.4. Pre-Teach Vocabulary

To facilitate your listeners' comprehension of the material, it's important to introduce vocabulary prior to the listening activity. Teachers should cover keywords or phrases that may create confusion because of their unfamiliar meanings, tricky pronunciations,

irregular spellings or complex conversations. Explicitly teaching these words can help students avoid possible obstacles and improve their comprehension overall.

Step 1: Introduce the Word

Start by presenting each keyword. Highlight five important details: Break the word into syllables. Indicate how many syllables the word has. Show where the stress falls within the word. Model the correct pronunciation clearly and slowly. Point out any unusual or challenging spelling patterns. Ask students to listen carefully and repeat the word to reinforce its pronunciation and rhythm.

Step 2: Analyze and Explore Encourage deeper exploration of each word:

Identify familiar spelling patterns or create word families. Think of synonyms, antonyms, or related words. Help students figure out the meaning. If needed, offer translations or compare the word to similar terms in their native language to highlight differences.

Step 3: Record and Reinforce

Have students write the word in their vocabulary notebooks, along with its definition, pronunciation guide, and an example sentence. Encourage them to add personal touches like drawings, colors, or memory aids.

Step 4: Practice Pronunciation

Say the word again and ask individual students to repeat it. Praise those who pronounce it well and let them demonstrate for the class, reinforcing confidence and peer learning.

Step 5: Create Contextual Sentences

Guide students to use the word in a sentence. Offer feedback to refine their usage. Then, write an example on the board, say it aloud, and have the class repeat it together.

Step 6: Elicit Real-Life Examples

Ask targeted questions to encourage students to connect the word to their own experiences. For example, with the word “shop,” you might ask, “What can you buy at a shop?” or “Is there a shop near your home?” Once students run out of ideas, provide more examples to expand their understanding.

Step 7: Extend and Repeat

Repeat the process with similar words or contexts. Encourage connections between what students already know and the new vocabulary. By following these steps, teachers not only boost students’ comprehension but also strengthen their confidence and ability to use new words effectively. This approach prepares learners to engage with listening materials more meaningfully and with greater ease.

3.5 Visual Aids

Through visual aids, effective language teaching supplies transform listening comprehension and joining the learner. Cleverly designed visuals in theory can lend richness, clarity, and persistence to mental imagery. David is one of the oldest forms of application of auditory learning with nice visuals. Visual Activity Aids Retaining What is Taught by Linking Senses. Visual aids provide an essential information that it would be better retention and comprehension-wise when sensory systems connect together with visual and auditory (Qasserras, 2024) in the article The Role of Visual Learning Aids Across Diverse Learning Styles in High School Education. Teaching multi-sensory provide complete interactivity in teaching while accommodating different learning styles, promoting inclusivity and engagement.

3.5.1 Applications of Visual Aids

Visual aids offer a range of applications that can effectively support language acquisition:

- **Flashcards:** Useful for vocabulary drills, picture dictations, and prompts for storytelling or conversational practice.
- **Pictures with Blanks:** Incorporating images with missing sounds, taped recordings, or written words provides rich content for listening and speaking exercises.
- **Illustrated Texts:** Pairing text passages with corresponding images helps learners visualize content, making abstract concepts more accessible, especially for visual learners.

3.5.2 Pre-Teaching Vocabulary with Visual Aids

Identify and introduce some key vocabulary, using visual aids, that is likely to impede understanding from selected pre-listening activities. Show words beside pictures, pronunciation guides, and contextual examples to better prepare students for the listening task. In this way, the cognitive load is reduced by introducing the rare words to learners so that they may focus on the message rather than solely decoding individual word meanings. Further, semantic maps visually organize related vocabulary to help advance students' ability to predict content and form mental connections about what they hear.

3.5.3 Creative Integration Techniques

You can creatively combine visual aids with auditory exercises to foster dynamic learning:

- **Symbol-Based Activities:** Drawing symbols or shapes representing concepts or learner names on the board.
- **Auditory Commands:** Assigning sounds to visual elements and asking students to match them based on spoken instructions. This activity builds listening precision and can be adapted to various proficiency levels.

3.5.4 Quality and Relevance of Visual Aids

The effectiveness of visual aids depends on their clarity, simplicity, and relevance to the language task. High-quality line drawings with minimal yet precise details ensure learners focus without becoming overwhelmed. Complex visuals are unnecessary when simple, well-designed illustrations convey meaning effectively.

3.5.5 Enhancing Interactivity and Engagement

Incorporating well-chosen visual aids fosters interactive learning. Associating auditory commands with visual symbols encourages active listening, while visual prompts can drive advanced-level discussions or creative writing tasks. Visual aids not only bridge the gap between language and meaning but also cultivate a rich, multisensory learning environment.

For every single to start his/her lesson, visual aids are indispensable in language teaching. When educators strategically integrate them into listening and speaking activities, they can deepen comprehension, improve retention, and cater to diverse learning preferences. As Qasserras (2024) stresses, the thoughtful use of visual learning tools transforms abstract language learning into a tangible, engaging, and highly effective educational experience.

3.6 Skimming and Scanning

In this listening activity, students need to identify some specific findings on what they are hearing. Drawing from techniques traditionally associated with reading, skimming and scanning can be adapted to enhance listening comprehension as well. As Qasserras (2023) writes in *Beyond the Words: The Art and Science of Teaching Reading Interactively*, skimming constitutes quickly processing a text to get the main idea, while specific information (such as a name, date, or some key fact) is searched for as scanning. These strategies are integral to effective reading practice and extend their principles.

The actual difference between skimming and scanning comes down to purpose and method. Skimming dashes through sections of written material to derive meaning in general across them. However, scanning is more controlled, as it entails the focused search of a certain passage for particular data or a specific answer. Therefore, for learners to have such skills in a listening context, they needed to be taught how to listen for general themes as well as concrete little facts, bringing to bear the two-faced purpose to which skimming and scanning are applied in reading.

According to Qasserras (2023), the other reason for skimming and scanning skills is to ensure engagement in summarization practice. Teachers will involve students in diverse techniques of summarization and in doing so develop natural, free competency of comprehension that will span reading and listening scopes. In general, making students participate in activities that compel them to summarize their listening experience tightens their ability to sieve through relevant information quickly and very well, ultimately improving their reading and listening efficacy.

3.7 Prior Knowledge

This cognitive strategy uses students' prior knowledge and experiences to help them understand new information or to make connections between new information and what they already know (Spire & Donley, 1998). Beginning instruction on a new concept by asking students what they already know about a topic activates existing knowledge and ideas on that subject and creates an early interest in learning about the topic. Once teachers capture students' attention, the learners often become more motivated to learn about topics that resonate with their personal experiences. By making connections between new content and what a student already knows, that student becomes more personally involved in the learning process. Furthermore, the connections that are made between prior knowledge and the new learning are important because they serve as a foundation from which to build new knowledge, which increases our ability to recall information accurately and makes the new learning relevant to one's everyday life.

Research on prior knowledge suggests there are a number of potential benefits in using this strategy with your students (Qasserras, 2023). First, it activates what students have already learned about a subject or concept. Then it helps to build a critically important foundation for future learning and understanding. Finally, it may help to facilitate a long-term understanding of the material being taught by connecting abstract concepts with conceptual experiences.

3.8 Intonation and Stress

Fairly experienced teachers like us believe that intonation and stress are two primary elements in listening skills. This is simply because they act as catalysts to well communication. Stress, intonation, body language: these are the three main conduits we use while putting forth meaning, emotion, and emphasis in day-to-day conversations. The teachers have to equip students with this knowledge because only through the incorporation of the essential aspects of understanding will they benefit in terms of elevating their listening processes and overall proficiency in language.

3.8.1 Use of Intonation and Stress in Communication

Stress is the emphasis given to one or more syllables or to particular words in a sentence while intonation is the rise and fall of voice which gives different meanings or emotions. These two, along with gestures and body language, form a unique conglomeration to create all possible nuances attainable through the natural spoken word. This behaviour is mostly absent in non-native speakers and thus can never be recognized in them. Therefore, it must be taught as the main aspect of stress and intonation as they are used in the artificial field of communication.

English is a stress-timed language according to that, the pattern according to which the speech is designed is by having the syllable imbued under stress take place with unstressed syllables lying fitfully between them. Syllable-timed reached about the same time to each syllable, in contrast, was Spanish. Teaching the student with this gives them entry into understanding stress pattern application in meaning and rhythm when it comes to English, thus easing them into the conversation and appropriate responses.

3.8.2 Teaching Intonation and Stress

To effectively teach these listening strategies, instructors can use various techniques:

- **Listening Practice with Audio Clips:** Provide students with examples of different intonation patterns, such as rising intonation for yes/no questions and falling intonation for statements.
- **Emphasizing Sentence Stress:** Highlight how shifting the stress in a sentence can change its meaning (e.g., "I didn't say she stole the money" versus "I didn't say she stole the money").
- **Kinesthetic Learning:** Use body movements or gestures to indicate stressed syllables or pitch changes, helping students connect physical cues with auditory input.
- **Stress-Timed and Syllable-Timed Exercises:** Contrast English stress-timed rhythm with syllable-timed languages to demonstrate how timing affects fluency and understanding.

3.8.3 Benefits for Listening Comprehension

The students will now also be better equipped to identify important information, emotional cues, and even what the speaker is trying to get across with his or her message if they have learned the patterns of stress and intonation. They may be able to recognize the actual message that the speaker is trying to bring across and apply the stresses on keywords to be able to hone in on vital content and the type of command or question they will have an attitude when confronting the situation. This newer awareness leads to more effective listening and better skills in listening for conversation.

3.9 Note-Taking

Note-taking is an important factor in effective listening, although it is commonly viewed as a skill rather than something learned. In fact, those who note effectively do not merely write down what is heard. Rather, they rephrase or paraphrase the words of speakers and grasp the very meaning of the content in their own way. Thus, it makes note-taking all the more valuable techniques in processing college lectures and instructions from teachers and learning a language (Ngwoke *et al.*, 2022).

3.9.1 Importance of Taking Notes in Listening

Note-taking is an ability to study across disciplines such that it benefits the student in not only listening but also learning. It helps students:

- **Focus Attention:** Make them more alert to the spoken material since they are actively engaged by it.
- **Organize Information:** From the main ideas and supporting detail organization of notes, students get to see the concert flow throughout the lecture or conversation.
- **Monitor Understanding:** For instance, through taking notes, students can reflect on understanding and recognize where they have not understood certain things and possibly return to those elements.

- **Support Memory and Recall:** Reinforcement occurs when learners come back to review those notes later through time and recapture the information learned.

Therefore, note-taking encourages students to actively engage with the listening process, making it easier to process academic content and complex language structures. It provides a framework for recognizing key points, summarizing information, and integrating new knowledge with existing mental models.

3.9.2 Research Insights on Note-Taking for L2 Learners

Numerous studies highlight the benefits of note-taking for language learners. Salame and Thompson (2020) demonstrate that note-taking effectively compensates for weak listening skills.

- **Helping Students Focus:** Encouraging active listening to distinguish between essential and non-essential information.
- **Enhancing Organization:** Providing a structure that clarifies relationships between ideas.
- **Boosting Recall:** Improving memory of spoken content by reinforcing it through writing.
- **Fostering Skill Integration:** Increasing awareness of the interplay between listening and reading strategies.

Despite its many benefits, some limitations remain. Research indicates that note-taking may not significantly enhance vocabulary acquisition or fully compensate for gaps in fundamental listening skills. However, with guided practice and explicit strategy instruction, students can develop more effective note-taking techniques to maximize comprehension and learning outcomes.

3.9.3 Practical Approaches to Teaching Note-taking

Teachers can support students by introducing structured note-taking strategies such as:

- **Cornell Method:** Dividing the page into sections for notes, cues, and summaries.
- **Mind Mapping:** Using diagrams to visually represent relationships between ideas.
- **Abbreviations and Symbols:** Teaching shorthand techniques to increase speed and efficiency.

It is so practical for teachers to integrate these methods into listening instruction, as they will empower learners to become active, strategic listeners, ultimately enhancing their academic success and language proficiency.

3.10 Inference

Inference is a foundational concept in effective listening and one of the most natural and essential semiotic skills. Since spoken language is often incomplete or ambiguous, listeners must go beyond the literal meaning of words, drawing on contextual clues, prior knowledge, and linguistic cues to interpret the speaker's intended meaning. According to Qasserras (2023) in *Systematic Review of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Language Education: A Balanced Perspective*, inference plays a pivotal role in

communicative language teaching (CLT), where context significantly influences comprehension.

3.10.1 The Role of Context in Inference

Consider the input: *"Are you going to leave now?"* The surface meaning is a simple question about departure. However, depending on the context and prosody, the question could imply:

- 1) A direct inquiry about immediate plans,
- 2) A polite prompt for someone to leave,
- 3) A suggestion that the speaker is ready to leave.

The ability to infer which meaning is intended depends on the listener's understanding of the situation, prior conversations, tone of voice, and the social or cultural norms guiding interaction. This demonstrates that effective listening requires not just decoding words but also interpreting them in relation to contextual and pragmatic cues.

3.10.2 Inference as a Core Listening Strategy

Qasserras (2023) highlights that teaching inference requires training students to use schema-based knowledge and domain familiarity. In CLT, listeners are encouraged to:

- **Pay Attention to Stress and Intonation:** These elements often indicate emphasis, sarcasm, or other nuanced meanings.
- **Interpret Contextual Clues:** Understanding who is speaking, where the conversation takes place, and the topic of discussion provides a critical background for inferring meaning.
- **Draw on Schematic Knowledge:** Prior experiences and cultural frameworks help predict and interpret conversational content.

3.10.3 Practical Approaches to Teaching Inference

In language instruction, inference activities can be designed to:

- **Provide Context-Rich Scenarios:** Use dialogues and audio texts where context plays a decisive role in meaning-making.
- **Teach Intonation and Prosody:** Highlight how variations in tone change the inferred meaning of statements.
- **Engage in Predictive Listening:** Encourage students to anticipate the next part of a conversation based on what they've heard so far.

ESL/EFL educators should stress on the inference sub-skill since it enhances listening comprehension by enabling learners to interpret underlying meanings beyond literal language. This fits with communicative approaches that value real interaction and pragmatic competence (Qasserras, 2023): teachers can help students learn how to listen more actively and with more awareness of the situation by using inference-focused strategies in the classroom.

3.11. Summarizing

Summarizing is a valuable technique that enhances a learner's general understanding of a passage by condensing the main ideas into a simplified form. This process encourages active listening and critical thinking, as the learner must identify key points and synthesize them effectively. Repeated exposure to the passage, either by listening multiple times or focusing on keywords, helps reinforce comprehension. The summary itself should be concise, straightforward, and focused on the core message of each section.

A practical summarizing activity involves pairing students. One student reads a pre-written summary aloud while the other, sitting with their back to the passage, listens and writes down the content. This exercise sharpens both listening and note-taking skills. The listener must focus on capturing the essence of the summary while the reader practices articulating ideas clearly. We then switch roles to provide both students with equal opportunities to practice these skills.

After completing the activity, discussing the original passage allows students to compare their summaries with the actual content, fostering reflection on the accuracy and completeness of their work. This reflective comparison helps learners evaluate how effectively they grasped the main points, encouraging improvements in future listening and summarizing tasks. Additionally, group discussions deepen comprehension by exploring alternative perspectives and interpretations, creating a collaborative learning environment.

We, as educators, should incorporate summarizing into listening activities to promote critical thinking, active engagement, and improved comprehension for language proficiency development.

4. Listening Processing

Finally, during listening processing, students incorporate their teacher's words into their understanding. In other words, the learners' brains encode the speech and transfer the spoken message to their minds. This processing phase has a filter mechanism that will filter the learners' minds. This filter mechanism will filter out the informative signals from the teacher's speech in order to avoid overloading their minds with information. The learners use this process to comprehend the information their teacher provides. When the teacher is repeating the instructional feedback, it does not mean that the teacher is repeating the original task. In the first repetition, the teacher can present the spoken message faster in order to read the learners' processing and to make early adjustments. Students need this because if they understand the message after one repetition, the teacher doesn't need to give feedback.

4.1 Top-down Processing

Top-down processing is a key listening strategy that encourages learners to listen for general understanding and to identify overarching themes in discourse or conversations. Teachers should guide their students to focus on the "big picture" first, before diving into specific details. This strategy can be particularly effective in helping learners get the gist

of what is being communicated, especially in real-world situations where they might need to understand the general message without necessarily grasping every word or detail. As noted by Utomo & Sulistyowati (2022), top-down processing involves listening for overall understanding and general themes of discourse or conversations, which can be especially useful when attempting to comprehend meaning from spoken input.

4.1.1 Teacher Instructions

- 1) **Introduce the Context.** Before listening, provide students with a brief introduction to the content, such as the topic, setting, or key themes. This helps students to activate their prior knowledge and mentally prepare for the listening task. For example, before playing a conversation about travel, introduce the themes of transportation and destinations.
- 2) **Encourage Predictions.** Ask students to predict what the listening might be about based on the title, keywords, or images provided. This engages them in top-down processing by activating their general knowledge and allowing them to anticipate the content. Encourage them to think about the type of information they expect to hear (e.g., main ideas, general topics, or emotions).
- 3) **4.1.1.3 Listen for Global Understanding.** Play the listening passage once or twice, emphasizing that students should focus on the general meaning rather than specific words or details. Remind them to listen for the broader themes, main ideas, and the general purpose of the conversation or discourse. You may prompt them with guiding questions like, "What is the main topic?" or "What is the speaker's attitude toward the issue?"
- 4) **Post-listening Reflection.** After the initial listening, engage students in a discussion about the overall message. Ask them to summarize the content and identify any general themes or ideas. This will reinforce their ability to grasp the main point of the discourse, even if they missed specific details.
- 5) **Integrate Bottom-Up Processing.** Once students have understood the general context, encourage them to listen again, this time focusing on specific details such as dates, names, or facts. This combination of top-down and bottom-up processing allows students to refine their comprehension and improve their ability to use lower-level information to further clarify the meaning.
- 6) **Practice with Varied Contexts.** To build fluency in top-down processing, expose students to different types of listening materials, such as news reports, interviews, or casual conversations. This variety helps students recognize how top-down processing applies across various genres and contexts.

By emphasizing the importance of top-down processing, teachers will encourage students to develop stronger listening skills that allow them to comprehend and engage with spoken input more effectively. This approach helps learners manage the complexity of listening tasks, particularly in situations where they might not understand every detail but still need to grasp the overall meaning. As highlighted by Utomo & Sulistyowati (2022), listening for general understanding is a critical component in listening comprehension.

4.2 Bottom-up Processing

Bottom-up processing in listening involves the listener receiving auditory input and progressively processing the speech from individual sounds to full comprehension. According to the bottom-up theory, listeners rely on speech recognition to find meaning as they listen to English. They first hear a sound, recognize which one it is, identify its sequence, determine it as speech, and then comprehend the meaning by interpreting and evaluating the relevance of the information. This process builds an increasingly complex mosaic from noise to a semantic whole. Importantly, listening is not about understanding every single word, as even native speakers miss parts of a conversation. The key is to comprehend the overall meaning of the sounds and context rather than focusing on recognizing every word.

The significance of bottom-up processing is emphasized by Oh (2020), who discusses the role of phonemic awareness, word recognition, and auditory processing in constructing meaning from speech. Oh's study highlights the importance of these foundational skills in helping listeners build comprehension step by step, underscoring the need for language learners to develop strong word recognition and phonological skills to interpret speech accurately. These skills are crucial as learners can rely on their background knowledge and context to infer meaning, even when they miss a word or two (Oh, 2020).

4.2.1 Teacher Instructions

- 1) **Phonemic Awareness Activities:** Begin with exercises that focus on recognizing and distinguishing individual sounds (phonemes). Utilize minimal pairs, dictation, and phonemic transcription tasks to develop this skill.
- 2) **Word Recognition Practice:** Engage students in activities that emphasize recognizing words in spoken language. This can include listening to recordings and identifying specific words, as well as practicing pronunciation to aid in recognition.
- 3) **Segmented Listening Tasks:** Provide listening exercises where students focus on short segments of speech, such as sentences or phrases, to practice decoding and understanding at the word level.
- 4) **Contextual Clue Exercises:** Encourage students to use contextual information to aid in word recognition and comprehension. This can involve listening to passages and predicting upcoming words based on context.
- 5) **Repetition and Reinforcement:** Have students listen to the same material multiple times to reinforce their decoding skills and improve their ability to recognize words and sounds.
- 6) **Integration with Top-Down Processing:** Combine bottom-up activities with top-down strategies to provide a comprehensive approach to listening comprehension. This integration helps students use their background knowledge to support their decoding efforts.

Educators need to focus on bottom-up processing to help students build a strong foundation in listening comprehension and enable them to decode and understand spoken language more effectively.

5. Listening Strategies

Teachers must place more emphasis on assisting students in developing effective listening strategies. They should teach students how to get better at using the multitude of bottom-up strategies available to them. These types of strategies include predicting successful guesses at the signals to listen for in the input, maintaining attention to the input and appropriately reacting to these signals, picking out and assigning meaning to useful bits and pieces of input, and guessing at word meanings for unfamiliar words. These strategies are effective at helping students maintain attention but are also useful at helping them develop listening skills. In particular, they can aid the development of subject matter knowledge, rebuild intended incomprehensible structures, and aid pattern recognition. Yet, this emphasis on teaching listening strategies may not necessarily be the 'stuff' of highly motivating language classes, especially for advanced students.

5.1 Intensive Listening

Intensive listening involves learners focusing on short, carefully chosen segments of spoken language, such as words, sentences, or longer discourse, depending on the learning goals (Kobayashi, 2020). The key to this approach is paying close attention to both the meaning and the language used in the spoken extract. When selecting these listening materials, it's important to consider the learners' overall language needs, though there is still room for general language improvement.

In choosing audio materials, two factors that educators should prioritize are ensuring the listening tasks align with the broader learning objectives and avoiding excessive reliance on audio technology. By integrating listening activities with other aspects of the course, teachers can provide variety while maintaining continuity. The chosen materials should also be new enough to engage the learners and contribute to their experiential knowledge. Ultimately, the goal is to make sure the listening activities meet the learners' linguistic needs, as how they perceive these tasks plays a crucial role in their learning experience.

5.2 Extensive Listening

Encourage students to develop a habit of listening in English, as this practice, much like reading, significantly enhances their overall language proficiency. Extensive listening complements intensive listening, contributing to the improvement of learners' listening skills, vocabulary acquisition, cognitive development and fostering greater learner autonomy. It also helps provide the right input and nurtures a passion for listening to English. Numerous studies support the benefits of extensive listening, highlighting its positive impact on comprehension, listening speed, vocabulary growth, and learner motivation (Turan Öztürk & Tekin, 2020; Barella & Linarsih, 2020).

Extensive listening mirrors the principles of extensive reading, as it involves exposing learners to simplified, comprehensible spoken language without the pressure of completing tasks, correcting errors, or adhering to time constraints. Passive listening primarily aims to enjoy and absorb language, allowing learners to subconsciously process it. This type of listening usually takes place outside the classroom, in environments where learners can casually listen to content such as podcasts, audiobooks, or TV shows in English. Through this relaxed exposure to spoken English, learners activate their phonological system, enabling them to recognize and process language patterns more quickly.

Prosodic features, such as intonation and rhythm, play a crucial role in helping learners maintain comprehension, even when they might miss certain details. The repetitive and engaging nature of extensive listening ensures that learners remain immersed in the language, which enhances their listening ability. By the end of their educational journey, learners should have refined their phonological sensitivity and decoding skills, and they should transfer these skills to their language learning through enjoyable and motivating listening activities.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary

A listening lesson does not mean only for students to listen to audio materials, transcribe, and then check the answers. Teachers need to prepare a lot more to help students get the most from the listening exercises. In fact, many important principles for teaching and material production—such as authenticity, pre-listening and post-listening activities, a variety of exercise types and tasks, linking listening to pronunciation, and demonstrating whether a listening skill is of use—are essential. A recent graduate or underprepared instructor may be unsure how to apply these principles. There are indeed principles; effective practice requires skill and awareness.

In summary, when incorporating all the aforementioned elements, the very first, easy, and quick four steps are: activate, follow-up, develop listening, and close with some debriefing questions if there is spare time. In order to make those steps work effectively, make sure to use different techniques, different methods, and different ways to respond to their tasks and questions and perform follow-up and closing (Qasserras and Qasseras, 2023). The questions provided in the procedure and question sections are clear and quite useful. Note that careful planning and close attention to the details of activities within each section are essential. Now, you have the strategies and resources to give your learners numerous repetitions of native or expert speech or to conduct audio intervention with care and skill. Go to work, but bear in mind that teaching is an exciting endeavor. With today's high-tech teaching and learning aids, there is also adequate help, so do not repeat; keep this in mind while staying innovative.

6.2 Implications

The general results of our systematic analysis lead to the belief that teachers could improve the listening skills of their students by taking care of the efficiency of teaching activities, the relationship between confidence and anxiety when listening in L2, the way feedback is given, and the attitudes toward listening in L2. Placing more emphasis on the development of students' listening skills, creating more listening materials, nurturing confidence, dealing with anxiety, and using a variety of idea-type assignments will greatly contribute to the improvement of their students' listening abilities. Our results show that content feedback contributes positively to changes in listening performance at a lower intermediate level. While the relationship with confidence and anxiety is more effective at the lower levels than at the higher intermediate level, students with a better self-concept of their listening skills learn in an examination situation in a more relaxed way and are less anxious, benefiting from the teaching much more.

This analysis adds arguments to those concluding that listening classes should therefore provide more opportunities and better training to enable students to become better listeners and that more time should be allocated to the design and preparation of audio materials to be used in an EFL listening class. More research is needed to investigate the influence of the level of input, the type and design of listening activities, and the relationship between anxiety and the listening outcome. It is necessary to determine if paying greater attention to these three aspects can improve the listening performance of our students in higher education and at other educational levels. It is also important to be clear about the role of audio materials and look at how different teaching and learning factors affect the process of developing each listening skill in particular. Finally, attention needs to be given to the influence of the multitude of variables that have been identified as exerting their influence during the development of listening proficiency in the academic environment.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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