



THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING LISTENING SKILLS

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Tayanch so'zlar: urg'u, sheva, autentik, video, kasseta, radioeshittiruv.

Ключевые слова: акцент, диалект, аутентичный, видео, кассета, радиопередача.

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One of the main reasons for getting students to listen to spoken English is to let them hear different varieties and accents — rather than just the voice of their teacher with its own idiosyncrasies. In today's world, they need to be exposed not only to one variety of English (British English, for example) but also to varieties such as American English, Australian English, Caribbean English, Indian English or West African English. When people of different nationalities speak to each other, they often use English too, so that a Swiss flight attendant might well have to understand a Japanese woman's English variety, just as an Argentinian might need to be able to cope with a Russian's version[2].

There are, of course, problems associated with the issue of language variety. Within British English, for example, there are many different dialects and accents. The differences are not only in the pronunciation of sounds ('bath' like 'laugh' vs 'bath' like cat') but also in grammar (the use of shall' in northern varieties compared with its use in 'Standard English' - the southern, BBC-type variety; the grammatically coherent use of 'done', e.g. 'I done it' in non-standard English). The same is of course true for American, Indian or West African English.

Despite the desirability of exposing students to many varieties of English, however, common sense is called for. The number of different varieties (and the degree to which they are different from the one students are learning) will be a matter for the teacher to judge, based on the students' level, where the classes are taking place etc. But even if they only hear occasional (and very mild)



varieties of English which are different from the teacher's, it will give them a better idea of the world language which English has become.

The main method of exposing students to spoken English is through the use of taped material which can exemplify a wide range of topics such as advertisements, news broadcasts, poetry reading plays, (pop) songs with lyrics, speeches, telephone conversations and manner of spoken exchanges. Teachers can imitate these, but good tapes; far more powerful.

The second major reason for teaching listening is because it helps students to acquire language subconsciously even if teachers do not pay attention to its special features. Exposure language is a fundamental requirement for anyone wanting to learn. Listening to appropriate tapes provides such exposure and students get information not only about grammar and vocabulary but also pronunciation, rhythm, intonation, pitch and stress.

Lastly, just as with reading any help we can give students in performing that skill will help them to be better listeners.

The debate about the use of authentic listening material is just as fierce as listening as it is in reading. If, for example, we play a tape of a political speech to complete beginners, they won't understand a word. If, on the other hand, we give them a realistic (though not authentic) tape of a telephone conversation, they may learn much more about the language - and start to gain confidence as a result.

Listening demands listener engagement, too. Long tapes on subjects which students are not interested in at all will not only be demotivating, but students might well 'switch off' - and once they do that it becomes difficult for them to tune back into the tape. Comprehension is lost and the listening becomes valueless.

Everything depends on level, and the kind of tasks that go with a tape. There may well be some authentic material which is usable by beginners such as pre-recorded announcements, telephone messages etc. More difficult material may be appropriate for elementary students provided the questions they are asked do not demand detailed understanding. Advanced students may benefit from scripted material provided that it is interesting and subtle enough - and provided the tasks that go with it are appropriate for their level.

Since, as we have said, listening to tapes is a way of bringing different kinds of speaking into the classroom, we will want to play different kinds of tape to them, e.g. announcements, conversations, telephone exchange lectures, 'plays', news broadcasts, interviews, other radio programme stories read aloud etc.

There are a number of ways in which listening activities differ from other classroom exercises: firstly, tapes go at the same speed for everybody.



Language study or speaking practice - or even reading, where individual students can read (to some extent) at their own pace - the tape continues even if individual students are lost. Unlike reading, listeners to a tape cannot flick back to a previous paragraph, re-read the headline, stop to look at the picture and think for a bit before continuing. On the contrary, they have to go with the speed of the voice(s) they are listening to. Of course, they can stop tapes and rewind them, but, essentially, the speed of the speaker(s) dominates the interaction, not that of the listener. It is perhaps this relentlessness of taped material which accounts for the feeling of panic which many students experience during listening activities. If they fail to recognise a word or phrase they haven't understood - and if, therefore, they stop to think about it - they often miss the next part of the tape and are soon falling behind in terms of comprehension. It is especially for this reason that students have to be encouraged to listen for general understanding first rather than trying to pick out details immediately. They must get into the habit of letting the whole tape 'wash over them' on first hearing, thus achieving general comprehension before returning to listen for specific detail[3].

Listening is special too because spoken language, especially when it is informal, has a number of unique features including the use of incomplete utterances (e.g. 'Dinner?' serving as a perfectly functional way of asking 'Is dinner ready?'), repetitions (e.g. 'I'm absolutely sure, absolutely sure you know that she's right'), hesitations ('Yes, well, ummm, yes, possibly, but, er ...') etc. Experience of informal spoken English together with an appreciation of other spoken factors - the tone of the voice, the intonation the speakers use, rhythm, and background noise - will help students to tease meaning out of such speech phenomena.

Because of its special characteristics, teachers need to ensure that students are well prepared for listening and that they are clearly able to hear what they listen to. These and other concerns are summarized in the following six principles.

Almost everything about listening applies to video too. We have to choose video material according to the level and interests of our students. If we make it too difficult or too easy, the students will not be motivated. If the content is irrelevant to the students' interest, it may fail to engage them.

Video is richer than audio tape. Speakers can be seen. Their body movements give clues as to meaning, so do the clothes they wear, their location etc. Background information can be filled in visually.

Some teachers, however, think that video is less useful for teaching listening than audio tape precisely because, with the visual senses engaged as well as the audio senses, students pay less attention to what they are actually hearing[1].

Playing the tape without sound: students and teacher discuss what they see, what clues it gives them and then they guess what the characters are actually



saying. Once they have predicted the conversation, the teacher rewinds the video and plays it with sound.

Playing the tape but covering the picture: this reverses the previous procedure. While the students listen, they try to judge where the speakers are, what they look like, what's going on etc. When they have predicted this, they listen again, this time with the visual images as well.

Freezing the picture: the teacher presses the pause button and asks the students what's going to happen next. Can they predict?

There are many more video techniques, of course. Many teachers use video. It brings an extra dimension to the class and can be most enjoyable. Used carelessly, however, it soon loses any special quality and becomes instead a kind of second-rate television.

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РЕЗЮМЕ

Ushbu maqolada eshitish ko'nikmalarining ahamiyati, uni rivojlantirish yo'llari va nutq harakatida ifodalanishi aks ettirilishi ko'rib chiqilgan. Maqolada eshitish ko'nikmasini tilda o'ziga xos ifodalanishi ko'rsatib o'tilgan. Shu o'rinda eshitish ko'nikmasini rivojlantirish usullari misollar orqali ta'kidlab o'tilgan.

РЕЗЮМЕ

В данной статье рассматривается значение навыков аудирования, способы их развития и выражения в речи. В статье показано уникальное выражение навыков аудирования в языке. Здесь на примерах освещены методы развития умения слушать.

SUMMARY

This article examines the importance of listening skills, ways to develop them and their expression in speech. The article shows the unique expression of listening skills in language. Here, the methods of developing listening skills are emphasized through examples.