

THE DIFFICULTIES THAT ARISE IN CONDUCTING LISTENING EXERCISES IN ENGLISH LESSONS FOR SCHOOLCHILDREN

Baxriddinova Nasiba Abdumajidovna

Samarkand region, Samarkand city

KIUT English language philology

Abstract: A critical aspect of learning another language is listening and is essential when learning English in classrooms. The pedagogical and operational obstacles that emerge when educators arrange listening exercises among children, even when listening's acknowledged significance is taken into account, are substantial. The most important factors contributing to these challenges include the following among others: linguistic ones, cognitive, technical, environmental and motivational ones. This article analyses these issues in-depth through amalgamation of educational scholarship perspectives, observations in the classroom, classroom examples; which helps elucidate their contribution in creating educational achievement.

Key words: Listening skills, Language acquisition, Cognitive development, Listening anxiety, Listening instruction

In language education, listening is generally considered the most challenging of the four skills that include listening, speaking, reading and writing, particularly for children. Unlike reading or writing, listening is an immediate responsive skill requiring that learners have a little time to contemplate or re-examine the materials presented to the learners. As both of their primary and cognitive skills are developing, this problem is particularly problematic for school-age children. Non-native educators frequently point out many difficulties they face when attempting to incorporate productive listening activity into their teaching. The ascertainment of these issues is the very core of developing instruction on language and encouraging the acquisition of language in its entirety.

Listening exercises are rather challenging due to the cognitive task that the children in the school face. Children of age 7-14 are developing abilities in attention, memory and sound discrimination. Listeners in a second language need to differentiate sounds rapidly, realize when the words start and finish, understand new words, and interpret meaning simultaneously, when there is a brief exchange. Students usually lose interest in listening exercises in the case of unfamiliar accents or when speech is delivered rapidly. One common example might be two native English speakers talking with each other over the phone so that the students could listen to them on audio. Although the chosen vocabulary is appropriate for the students' grade, such aspects as the pace of delivery, diverse intonations, as well as colloquial connected speech

patterns may contribute to the students' difficulty. Learners may have some problems with such words as "gonna" (going to) or "wanna" (want to), or the combination of sounds in phrases like "Didgeet?" as they are not used to hearing contractions and elisions in formal context. Even though they know the words individually, it is difficult for them to understand them in quick natural-sounding speech contexts.

It is also shown to be difficult to locate listening materials that are indeed specific to the developmental level and proficiency levels of the learners. Audio materials commonly applied in schools could be outdated, too difficult and not appealing to children's interest. This challenge is high in the classroom where it is not native and schools are only as good as what they can buy or give out. Routines of listening often use the same routines from textbooks which do not reflect the nature of language or the cultural world for which learners are being educated. Textbooks provide an example where there is a listening exercise, which deals with buying train tickets in London. If in their everyday life the students have not been exposed to british monetary system or troop of public transport, they are on disadvantage during these exercises. An absence of the necessary background knowledge – schemata, makes it almost impossible to understand what is being listened to. Listening is effective only if the person can understand language, as well as the context around it.

Many listening exercises get disrupted by problems associated with equipment and environment on recurring basis. In the case of inadequate speakers, presence of outside or in classroom noise, and failure of the equipment, students' inability to hear what is presented may occur. In deprived or rural classrooms, teachers often use worn cassette or CD players that often result in audio distortion. During packed classes, background sounds from within or outside a room make it difficult for students to concentrate on what they are learning. In many situations, an entire group of 35 students is all linked to one outdated piece of audio equipment. Some students can barely hear the recording as they are sitting a far distance, whereas others are troubled due to the unwanted noise around the audio device. Teacher's pausing or rewinding to explain something may disrupt the flow of the exercise sending the students to boredom or irritation level. Besides, the back row students often claim they can't hear the material properly, which makes the activity ineffective for a considerable number of students.

Children might become bored of listening tasks and are under more pressure if they continuously cannot understand the material. This breeds a cycle which erodes students' interest: If there is confusion about the material, a feeling of boredom is a common outcome, which can cause their listening skills to continue to deteriorate. As a rule, hearing is less an active process than speaking and writing, which require interaction and personal communication; this passivity is increased by the lack of additional activities or interactive features. Besides, students sometimes feel anxious

when it is necessary for them to listen in a foreign language. They fear to miss important details, answer questions incorrectly or explain to them things that they do not understand. The anxiety is manifested in physical reaction on the part of the students—for example, they do not sit still in their chairs, they do not look in the speaker's direction, they do not respond to the listening activity. Such anxiety is drawn out, for example, when a student, for instance, has to note down a text while listening to it without repetition and answer questions on what has been heard. Not having even part of the information may change the fact that they can't do the task and disappoint them. When the exercise is used for assessment and not for the learning not only students' difficulties but also the complexity of assessment are increased.

It is an area that receives a lot of recognition on the part of English teachers in that they believe they lack confidence in teaching listening skills. This lack in confidence is a result of poor preparation in selecting, adapting and using listening resources. Generally, listening exercises are merely turned into ritual – the track is played a couple of times, followed by a series of quick questions and nothing happens respectively. During an observed class it was noted that a teacher played audio materials relating to daily routines without ensuring that the students were well prepared for the content. without much sign of what was to be ahead the students could not understand the situation or most of the materials that were being made conversation. If the activity had been organized based on a structure – presenting students with key vocabulary, teaching them to predict from visual cues, and revisiting the answers after listening – this activity would have been much more successful.

In spite of the complexity of these issues, decent solutions are available that may help to overcome them. First of all, teachers should present vocabulary in advance and use images, stories, or discussion to introduce context. Listening activities should be scaffolded: by evaluating general understanding first then detail-oriented understanding of the activity. It is possible to use visual aids, gestures, and repeat the key points. What is more, listening exercises should be interactive. Through the process of breaking up the listening material with such activities such as giving questions to answer, providing roles, or letting the students act out parts, the teachers would engage the learners and thus the learners would understand more. Giving student a chance to talk about what they hear in pairs and groups before and after listening enhances their understanding of the content. Where such is viable, there will be merging with the use of up-to-date technology, such as audio devices and multimedia resources, and even subtitles, which will exponentially accelerate the effectiveness of instruction in listening.

Productive listening activities conducted in English classes for young students need attention beyond just the provision of an audio to students and gauging their comprehension of the content. These challenges have their roots in the complexity of

the language, the mental efforts needed, technical issues and the way emotions such as the motivation and stress affect students. As long as teachers and institutions concern themselves with the role giving purposeful listening instruction plays in the classroom, improvement is still a possibility. When prudently chosen materials are combined with well-designed instruction and techniques, the listening exercises turn into a boon for acquisition of language instead of an area of difficulty for those who study.

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